

A LOST LADY *By Willa Cather*

AINSLEE'S

MARCH, 1926

25 CENTS





"I can tell that taste
in the dark"

CHESTERFIELD

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\$26 a Day for Schreck

"Use my name as a reference and depend on me as a booster. The biggest thing I ever did was answer your advertisement. I am averaging better than \$200 a month from my own business now. I used to make \$15 a week."

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I Will Train You at Home—Spare time Only Needed

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5 Outfits—Tools and Apparatus Included—No Extra Charge

In addition to giving my students employment service and consultation service, I give them also 5 complete working outfits without extra charge. These include tools, measuring instruments, material and a real electrical motor—among the finest outfits ever put together. You do practical work right from the start. After the first few lessons it enables you to make extra money every week doing odd electrical jobs in your spare time. Some students make as high as \$25 to \$35 a week in spare-time work while learning.

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Without obligating me in any way send me your Free Book and particulars of your Electrical Outfit Offers, Employment Service and proof that you can fit me for a big-pay electrical job.

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Address.....

Occupation.....

**AWARDS IN THE BOOK LOVERS' TOURNAMENT OF JANUARY
ARE ANNOUNCED IN THE FORETASTE ON PAGE 157**

March
1926

AINSLEE'S

STORIES THAT CHARM AND ALWAYS WILL

Vol. LVIII
No. 1

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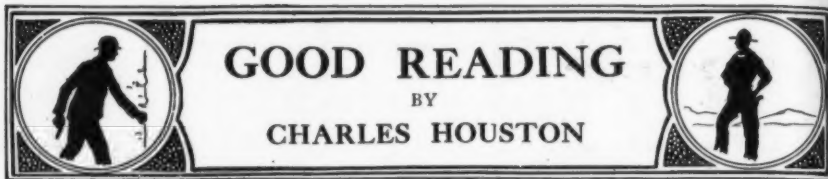
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Street No.

City State



Frankly he was bored. The long evenings seemed to drag interminably. He had met but few people in the small town to which his firm had sent him, and he could not speak their language of bridge and parties at the country club and other gossip of the neighborhood. To be sure there were the movies and the radio, but after a while even these began to pall.

And then, one day, passing through the neat little drug store on the town's square, his eye fell on the bright jacket of a book. He was not much of a reader. As a rule he began to nod after the first few chapters, but there was something about this particular book that appealed to him. He liked the picture on the jacket, the way it was bound, its title. And when he asked the dealer the price and found that it was only seventy-five cents, he took it away to the boarding house with him.

Two days later he was back in the drug store asking the clerk if he had any more books like the one that had kept him sitting on the edge of his chair through two of the most exciting evenings of his life. The clerk showed him the full list of books published by Chelsea House and selling for seventy-five cents.

Just another convert to "Good Reading," just another red-blooded young

American who is finding a new thrill in books.

It may be that you, too, have lost the reading habit, have forgotten all that a well-told story can do to take you out of yourself into lands of romance and adventure. If so, here's our prescription. Go to the nearest dealer and ask to see the books that bear this brand upon their jackets—"CH." That stands for good reading. It is the mark of one of the oldest and best-established publishing concerns in this country, Chelsea House, and every book that bears it deserves a place of honor in your library.

Here are some snapshots of the latest popular copyrights on the Chelsea House list. There are plenty of others as good, and when we say that, it is high praise, for Chelsea House has a way of finding out all that is best in modern fiction and offering it to the public at a ridiculously low price.



FOUR KNOCKS ON THE DOOR, by John Paul Seabrooke, Published by Chelsea House, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City. Price 75c.

When it comes to detective or mystery stories, some folks are mighty finicky. They are always on the lookout for something different, some new sort of problem on which to exercise their active wits. Probably it was unconscious on Mr. Seabrooke's part, but at

Continued on 2nd page following

**Extra Thick
Full
Oversize**



Derby CORD Tires

\$1.00
Down
Balance
on Easy
Payments

Yes, only \$1.00 down now brings you the genuine Derby Cord tire on approval. This is your opportunity to equip your car with brand new, first grade genuine Derby Cord tires at lower than list prices of advertised brands and on small monthly payments without feeling the expense. Read:

Guaranteed 10000 Miles

The genuine Derby Cord tire is guaranteed to be absolutely first quality. If any defects should develop, we will replace or repair the defective tire on the basis of 10,000 miles of service. The Derby tire is branded with the Straus & Schram name and backed by Straus & Schram ironclad guarantee. We know how the Derby is made and we say -- no matter what brand or what price, there is no better tire than the Derby. The Straus & Schram Derby Oversize Cord is an EXTRA HEAVY, EXTRA THICK, FULL OVERSIZE cord tire. Compare it for size and weight with ANY other well known makes sold for cash at higher prices.

Derby Special Non-Skid Tread

Our exclusive Derby Non-Skid Tread is extra thick and semi-flat, providing nearly twice as much wearing surface as the ordinary rounded or flat tread. So tough that it will show almost no wear after thousands of miles of service. The tread is scientifically designed to give the highest non-skid efficiency. The friction surface is of unadulterated new rubber, carefully vulcanized to prevent separation. The Derby Cord tire has that handsome all black color now preferred by motorists. Terms as low as--

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Note: We particularly recommend our 30x3 1-2 Giant Oversize Derby Cord -- a bigger, better, stronger tire. Gives greater comfort and greater mileage and the price is only a few cents more a month!

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30 x 3 1/2	Giant Oversize	\$23.90	Z8632A
31 x 4		30.85	Z8633A
32 x 4	"	33.75	Z8634A
33 x 4	"	34.40	Z8635A

Balloon Cord Tire (It fits Ford cars equipped at factory with small diameter wheels)			Number
29 x 4.40	Full Oversize	\$26.85	Z8636A

(We do not furnish any other sizes)

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30 x 3 1/2	3.35 No. Z8638A	4.75 No. Z8643A
31 x 4	4.60 No. Z8639A	5.50 No. Z8644A
32 x 4	4.80 No. Z8640A	5.90 No. Z8645A
33 x 4	4.95 No. Z8641A	6.00 No. Z8646A
29 x 4.40 for Balloon Tires--Red		4.90 No. Z8647A

\$2.50 a Month

On this wonderful new plan, if you need tires now, you need not wait until you have the cash. Send only \$1.00 with the coupon now and get as many tires as you'll need for your car this entire season up to \$50.00 worth. For over \$50.00 worth send 10% down. Pay the balance while using them in six equal monthly payments. You won't feel the expense on this monthly payment plan and you'll be free from tire trouble all year.

On Approval Send Coupon

Only \$1.00 with coupon brings the Genuine Derby tire to you on approval at our risk. If not satisfied after examination, send it back and we will refund your dollar plus transportation charges. Send the coupon today while these lowest rock-bottom prices last.

STRAUS & SCHRAM, Dept. T1923, Chicago, Ill.

I enclose \$1.00. (If your order is over \$50.00, enclose 10% down.) Send me on money-back approval and subject to your 10,000 mile guarantee the Genuine Derby Cord Tires and Tubes I have ordered below. If I am not satisfied, I may return the tires at once and you will refund my deposit including transportation charges. If satisfied, I will pay the balance of the total amount of my order in six equal monthly payments.

On this offer, you can buy up to \$50.00 worth for \$1.00 down. For over \$50.00 worth enclose 10 per cent down. Balance in six equal monthly payments.

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How Many _____ Fill in Tire No. _____

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How Many _____ Fill in Tube No. _____

Name _____

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ADVERTISING SECTION

any rate he wrote this story to order for just such readers. Here is a decidedly different yarn, one that keeps the reader guessing to the very end. If any one should come to your door while you are reading this book and knock four times you have good cause for legal action against him on the ground of shattered nerves. We won't give away the plot. That wouldn't be fair to you or the author, but we will tell you confidentially that you can go a long, long way and not find as corking a mystery tale as "Four Knocks on the Door."



THE BLACK SIGNAL, by David Manning,
Published by Chelsea House, 79 Seventh
Avenue, New York City. Price 75c.

Lew Melody! The name itself has a lilt and go to it, and there was plenty of "go" to its possessor as described in Mr. Manning's bang-up story of life near the old Mexican frontier. Lew was the sort of youngster whom you would like to have with you in a tight fix. You certainly would not like to have him against you. Fight was his middle name, and he did so much of it so well that he became plumb unpopular in the little town where he was brought up.

Then one day Lew came swaggering into a dance and his eyes fell on the golden hair and beautiful face of a girl, and from then on Lew was somehow different. Of course, he agreed to mend his old bad ways, but what a job he had carved out for himself! It was fully as hard for Lew to quit fighting as for a pinochle hound to throw away a deck. Get to meet Lew in this beautifully written book. He's your sort of man. When you have galloped along with him through adventures galore, you feel as though you had made a friend for life.

FRASER'S FOLLY, by W. E. Schutt, Published
by Chelsea House, 79 Seventh Avenue,
New York City. Price 75c.

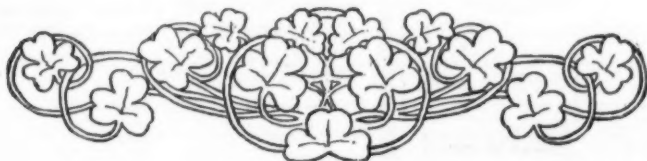
Here you bump into a sorry set of rogues and two real men who have been cast away together by a shipwreck. Both of them, through no real faults of their own, are men without a country. Exiled on the western watershed of the Andes, they come upon a gold-bearing quartz ledge, and from that time on their troubles begin. It is a story of plots and plotters that Mr. Schutt tells, a story that keeps you fascinated throughout. There's a girl in it, too, who is well worth the winning, a girl who could forgive and forget. Altogether "Fraser's Folly" is a rare find for the lover of good adventure stories.



WHERE THE TRAIL DIVIDES, by Roland
Ashford Phillips, Published by Chelsea
House, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City.
Price 75c.

You know the Canadian Mounted. You know that they have the reputation of always getting their man. Well, in this book it looks for a while as though there would be an exception to that rule. "Blondy" Morgan and his hard-boiled gang posed as ranchers. But most of the folks in town knew better. Morgan was an inveterate hater of law, an avowed enemy of the Canadian Mounted who policed Glory Mountain. His very existence was a reproach to the force under Inspector McCloud, but he was having things pretty much his own way until the day that the mysterious stranger named Fraser came to town. The conflict between Fraser and Morgan makes a thrilling story.

I was going to say that this was essentially a man's book. I have a sneaking notion that the ladies, too, will find in "Where the Trail Divides" plenty to justify the comment that here indeed is good reading.



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To those who enroll in near future—tools
Free
of any extra cost whatever. Also, a drafting table! Act Now!

An imported set of professional instruments; it's a beauty!



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Can a man learn drafting without any previous training or talent for drawing?

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YES!

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YES!

Do I actually get all instruments and supplies without one dollar's extra cost?

YES!

I need YOU with 100 firms BEGGING ME to send them more DRAFTSMEN. Many offer to take BEGINNERS, at \$50 a WEEK. Graduates can start at \$90 and \$100! GET BUSY!

Drafting is the BIG field, men. Every industry you can name BEGINS with the draftsman. Without mechanical drawings—by the thousands—every shop in the land would be STOPPED.

In fact, it is the SERIOUS SHORTAGE of draftsmen that brings this offer: I will furnish all instruments, supplies, even to the table, to those who start now!

PAY AS YOU GO Don't give me the excuse that you have no ready money for this golden opportunity. I am not so interested in cash; I want your application. I want at least 200 men to start right now. I want them ready to recommend by Spring! We will get a flood of letters saying "send us draftsmen," from every sort of industrial and engineering concern, and we must make good.

The first week's pay envelope of many a Dobe-trained draftsman has held enough to cover the entire cost of the course! Most students learn evenings, keeping on with their old work until ready to step into somebody's drafting room. The first month equips you to take on simple drafting jobs on the side. It helps you learn; I gladly permit this.

Well-Paid Positions Every Year You Turn

A draftsman soon forgets the days when he used to wonder where to get a job. Instead, he asks "What line of work interests me most?" And "What part of the country suits me best?" Twenty of my graduates went to Florida this year; three are in Japan; last month one wrote me from Ceylon. And I wish we had the count of how many Dobe draftsmen have become chiefs!

Positions loom up almost as soon as you are enrolled in a Dobe class! We receive requests

daily for junior men—for men only partly through our course. "We'll take a beginner," some concerns write us, "so long as he is a Dobe trained man and has begun right!"

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WARNING! The special offer of tools is for immediate action. Don't expect me to hold it open indefinitely. Clip the coupon now for free book:

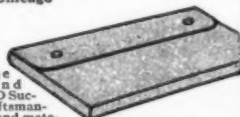
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GO INTO BUSINESS FOR YOURSELF without investing a penny. No rent to pay. No stock to carry. Yet you make bigger profits than regular storekeepers. Write for facts at once. Address Dept. 779, William C. Bartlett, Inc., 850 W. Adams Street, Chicago.

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ONE CENT! POST CARD BRINGS free solid gold stud offer to agents. Rajah Raynho Gem delivers experts. Raynho Gems, Dept. F 29, Salisbury, N. C.

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\$6-\$18 A DOZEN decorating pillow tops at home, experience unnecessary; particulars for stamp. Tapestry Paint Co., 110 La-Grange, Ind.

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ALL Men, Women, Boys, Girls, 17 to 65 willing to accept Government Positions \$117-\$250, traveling or stationary, write Mr. Ozment, 308, St. Louis, Mo., immediately.

\$115-\$400 MONTHLY PAID—By Station office positions. Free passes, experience unnecessary. Write Baker, Supt. (A331), Star Bldg., St. Louis, Mo.

ESTABLISH YOURSELF—AT HOME—As a Photographic Expert. Make \$75 a week while learning. Write at once for Temporary Offer. International Studios, Dept. 1401, 3661 Michigan Ave., Chicago.

EARN \$110 to \$250 monthly, expenses paid as Railway Traffic Inspector. We secure position for you after completion of 3 months' home-study course or money refunded. Excellent opportunities. Write for Free Booklet, CM-28, Stand. Business Training Inst., Buffalo, N. Y.

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BE A DETECTIVE—Earn big money, no experience necessary. Write for list cash rewards for information. C. T. Ludwig, 436 Westover Bldg., Kansas City, Mo.

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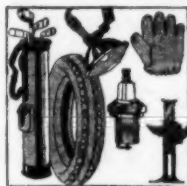
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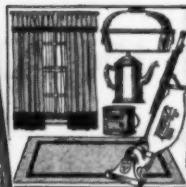
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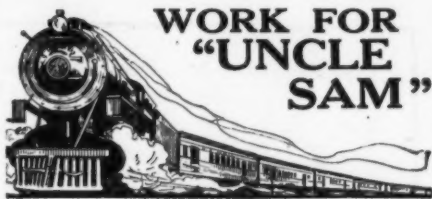
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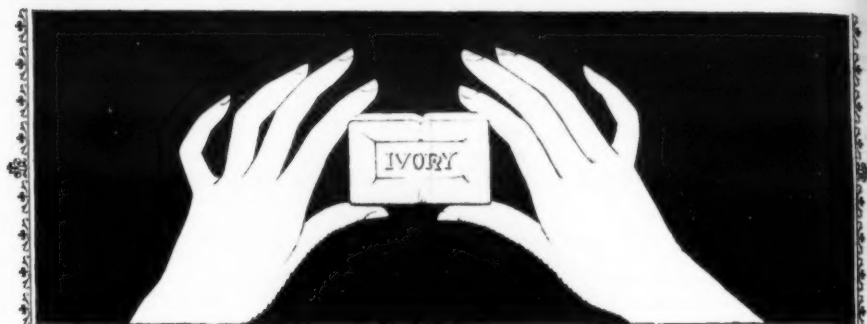
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A Complete Novel

by
Willa Cather
Author of: *One of Ours*



A Lost Lady

CHAPTER I.

THIRTY or forty years ago, in one of those gray towns along the Burlington Railroad, which are so much grayer to-day than they were then, there was a house well known from Omaha to Denver for its hospitality and for a certain charm of atmosphere. Well known, that is to say, to the railroad aristocracy of that time; men who had to do with the railroad itself, or with one of the "land companies" which were its by-products. In those days it was enough to say of a man that he was "connected with the

Burlington." There were the directors, the general managers, vice presidents, superintendents, whose names we all knew; and their younger brothers or nephews were auditors, freight agents, departmental assistants. Every one "connected" with the road, even the large cattle and grain shippers, had annual passes; they and their families rode about over the line a great deal. There were then two distinct social strata in the prairie States: the homesteaders and hand workers who were there to make a living, and the bankers and gentlemen ranchers who came from the Atlantic seaboard to invest money

and to "develop our great West," as they used to tell us.

When the Burlington men were traveling back and forth on business not very urgent, they found it agreeable to drop off the express and spend a night in a pleasant house where their importance was delicately recognized; and no house was pleasanter than that of Captain Daniel Forrester, at Sweet Water. Captain Forrester was himself a railroad man, a contractor, who had built hundreds of miles of road for the Burlington—over the sagebrush and cattle country, and on up into the Black Hills.

The Forrester place, as every one called it, was not at all remarkable; the people who lived there made it seem much larger and finer than it was. The house stood on a low, round hill, nearly a mile east of town; a white house with a wing, and sharp-sloping roofs to shed the snow. It was encircled by porches, too narrow for modern notions of comfort, supported by the fussy, fragile pillars of that time, when every honest stick of timber was tortured by the turning-lathe into something hideous. Stripped of its vines and denuded of its shrubbery, the house would probably have been ugly enough. It stood close into a fine cottonwood grove that threw sheltering arms to left and right and grew all down the hillside behind it. Thus placed on the hill, against its bristling grove, it was the first thing one saw on coming into Sweet Water by rail, and the last thing one saw on departing.

To approach Captain Forrester's property, you had first to get over a wide, sandy creek which flowed along the eastern edge of the town. Crossing this by the foot bridge or the ford, you entered the captain's private lane, bordered by Lombardy poplars, with wide meadows lying on either side. Just at the foot of the hill on which the house sat, one crossed a second

creek by the stout wooden road bridge. This stream traced artless loops and curves through the broad meadows that were half pasture land, half marsh. Any one but Captain Forrester would have drained the bottom land and made it into highly productive fields. But he had selected this place long ago because it looked beautiful to him, and he happened to like the way the creek wound through his pasture, with mint and joint grass and twinkling willows along its banks. He was well off for those times, and he had no children. He could afford to humor his fancies.

When the captain drove friends from Omaha or Denver over from the station in his democrat wagon, it gratified him to hear these gentlemen admire his fine stock, grazing in the meadows on either side of his lane. And when they reached the top of the hill, it gratified him to see men who were older than himself leap nimbly to the ground and run up the front steps as Mrs. Forrester came out on the porch to greet them. Even the hardest and coldest of his friends, a certain narrow-faced Lincoln banker, became animated when he took her hand, tried to meet the gay challenge in her eyes and to reply cleverly to the droll word of greeting on her lips.

She was always there, just outside the front door, to welcome their visitors, having been warned of their approach by the sound of hoofs and the rumble of wheels on the wooden bridge. If she happened to be in the kitchen, helping her Bohemian cook, she came out in her apron, waving a buttery iron spoon, or shook cherry-stained fingers at the new arrival. She never stopped to pin up a lock; she was attractive in dishabille, and she knew it. She had been known to rush to the door in her dressing gown, brush in hand and her long black hair rippling over her shoulders, to welcome Cyrus Dalzell, president of the Colorado & Utah; and

that great man had never felt more flattered. In his eyes, and in the eyes of the admiring middle-aged men who visited there, whatever Mrs. Forrester chose to do was "ladylike" because she did it. They could not imagine her in any dress or situation in which she would not be charming. Captain Forrester himself, a man of few words, told Judge Pommeroy that he had never seen her look more captivating than on the day when she was chased by the new bull in the pasture. She had forgotten about the bull and gone into the meadow to gather wild flowers. He heard her scream, and as he ran puffing down the hill, she was scudding along the edge of the marshes like a hare, beside herself with laughter, and stubbornly clinging to the crimson parasol that had made all the trouble.

Mrs. Forrester was twenty-five years younger than her husband, and she was his second wife. He married her in California and brought her to Sweet Water a bride. They called the place home even then, when they lived there but a few months out of each year. But later, after the captain's terrible fall with his horse in the mountains, which broke him so that he could no longer build railroads, he and his wife retired to the house on the hill. He grew old there—and even she, alas! grew older.

CHAPTER II.

But we will begin this story with a summer morning long ago, when Mrs. Forrester was still a young woman, and Sweet Water was a town of which great things were expected. That morning she was standing in the deep bay window of her parlor, arranging old-fashioned blush roses in a glass bowl. Glancing up, she saw a group of little boys coming along the driveway, barefoot, with fishing poles and lunch baskets. She knew most of them; there was Niel Herbert, Judge

Pommeroy's nephew, a handsome boy of twelve whom she liked; and polite George Adams, son of a gentleman rancher from Lowell, Massachusetts. The others were just little boys from the town: the butcher's red-headed son, the leading grocer's fat brown twins, Ed Elliott—whose flirtatious old father kept a shoe store and was the Don Juan of the lower world of Sweet Water—and the two sons of the German tailor—pale, freckled lads with ragged clothes and ragged, rust-colored hair, from whom she sometimes bought game or catfish when they appeared silent and spooklike at her kitchen door and thinly asked if she would "care for any fish this morning."

As the boys came up the hill she saw them hesitate and consult together. "You ask her, Niel."

"You'd better, George. She goes to your house all the time, and she barely knows me to speak to."

As they paused before the three steps which led up the front porch, Mrs. Forrester came to the door and nodded graciously, one of the pink roses in her hand.

"Good morning, boys. Off for a picnic?"

George Adams stepped forward and solemnly took off his big straw hat.

"Good morning, Mrs. Forrester. Please may we fish and wade down in the marsh and have our lunch in the grove?"

"Certainly. You have a lovely day. How long has school been out? Don't you miss it? I'm sure Niel does. Judge Pommeroy tells me he's very studious."

The boys laughed, and Niel looked unhappy.

"Run along, and be sure you don't leave the gate into the pasture open. Mr. Forrester hates to have the cattle get in on his blue grass."

The boys went quietly round the house to the gate into the grove, then

ran shouting down the grassy slopes under the tall trees. Mrs. Forrester watched them from the kitchen window until they had disappeared behind the roll of the hill. She turned to her Bohemian cook.

"Mary, when you are baking this morning, put in a pan of cookies for those boys. I'll take them down when they are having their lunch."

The round hill on which the Forrester house stood sloped gently down to the bridge in front, and gently down through the grove behind. But east of the house, where the grove ended, it broke steeply from high, grassy banks, like bluffs, to the marsh below. It was thither the boys were bound.

When lunch time came they had done none of the things they meant to do. They had behaved like wild creatures all morning; shouting from the breezy bluffs, dashing down into the silvery marsh through the dewy cobwebs that glistened on the tall weeds, swishing among the pale tan cattails, wading in the sandy creek bed, chasing a striped water snake from the old willow stump where he was sunning himself, cutting sling-shot crotches, throwing themselves on their stomachs to drink at the cool spring that flowed out from under a bank into a thatch of dark watercress. Only the two German boys, Rheinhold and Adolph Blum, withdrew to a still pool where the creek was dammed by a reclining tree trunk, and, in spite of all the noise and splashing about them, managed to catch a few suckers.

The wild roses were wide open and brilliant, the blue-eyed grass was in purple flower, and the silvery milkweed was just coming on. Birds and butterflies darted everywhere. All at once the breeze died, the air grew very hot, the marsh steamed, and the birds disappeared. The boys found they were tired; their shirts stuck to their bodies and their hair to their foreheads.

They left the sweltering marsh meadows for the grove, lay down on the clean grass under the grateful shade of the tall cottonwoods, and spread out their lunch. The Blum boys never brought anything but rye bread and hunks of dry cheese—their companions wouldn't have touched it on any account. But Thaddeus Grimes, the butcher's red-headed son, was the only one impolite enough to show his scorn. "You live on wienies to home, why don't you never bring none?" he bawled.

"Hush!" said Niel Herbert. He pointed to a white figure coming rapidly down through the grove, under the flickering leaf shadows—Mrs. Forrester, bareheaded, a basket on her arm, her blue-black hair shining in the sun. It was not until years afterward that she began to wear veils and sun hats, though her complexion was never one of her beauties. Her cheeks were pale and rather thin, slightly freckled in summer.

As she approached, George Adams, who had a particular mother, rose, and Niel followed his example.

"Here are some hot cookies for your lunch, boys." She took the napkin off the basket. "Did you catch anything?"

"We didn't fish' much. Just ran about," said George.

"I know! You were wading and things." She had a nice way of talking to boys, light and confidential. "I wade down there myself sometimes, when I go down to get flowers. I can't resist it. I pull off my stockings and pick up my skirts, and in I go!" She thrust out a white shoe and shook it.

"But you can swim, can't you, Mrs. Forrester," said George. "Most women can't."

"Oh, yes, they can! In California everybody swims. But the Sweet Water doesn't tempt me—mud and water snakes and bloodsuckers—ugh" she shivered, laughing.

"We seen a water snake this morning and chased him. A whopper!" Thad Grimes put in.

"Why didn't you kill him? Next time I go wading he'll bite my toes! Now, go on with your lunch. George can leave the basket with Mary as you go out." She left them, and they watched her white figure drifting along the edge of the grove as she stopped here and there to examine the raspberry vines by the fence.

"These are good cookies, all right," said one of the giggly, brown Weaver twins. The German boys munched in silence. They were all rather pleased that Mrs. Forrester had come down to them herself, instead of sending Mary. Even rough little Thad Grimes, with his red thatch and catfish mouth—the characteristic feature of all the Grimes brood—knew that Mrs. Forrester was a very special kind of person. George and Niel were already old enough to see for themselves that she was different from the other townswomen, and to reflect upon what it was that made her so. The Blum brothers regarded her humbly from under their pale, chewed-off hair, as one of the rich and great of the world. They realized, more than their companions, that such a fortunate and privileged class was an axiomatic fact in the social order.

The boys had finished their lunch and were lying on the grass talking about how Judge Pommeroy's water spaniel, Fanny, had been poisoned, and who had certainly done it, when they had a second visitor.

"Shut up, boys, there he comes now. That's 'Poison Ivy,'" said one of the Weaver twins. "Shut up, we don't want old Roger poisoned."

A well-grown boy of eighteen or nineteen, dressed in a shabby corduroy hunting suit, with a gun and game bag, had climbed up from the marsh and was coming down the grove between the rows of trees. He walked with a

rude, arrogant stride, kicking at the twigs, and carried himself with unnatural erectness, as if he had a steel rod down his back. There was something defiant and suspicious about the way he held his head. He came up to the group and addressed them in a superior, patronizing tone.

"Hullo, kids. What are you doing here?"

"Picnic," said Ed Elliott.

"I thought girls went on picnics. Did you bring teacher along? Ain't you kids old enough to hunt yet?"

George Adams looked at him scornfully. "Of course we are. I got a .22 Remington for my last birthday. But we know better than to bring guns over here. You better hide yours, Mr. Ivy, or Mrs. Forrester will come down and tell you to get out."

"She can't see us from the house. And anyhow, she can't say anything to me. I'm just as good as she is."

To this the boys made no reply. Such an assertion was absurd even to fish-mouthed Thad; his father's business depended upon some people being better than others, and ordering better cuts of meat in consequence. If everybody ate round steak like Ivy Peters' family, there would be nothing in the butcher's trade.

The visitor had put his gun and game bag behind a tree, however, and stood stiffly upright, surveying the group out of his narrow, beady eyes and making them all uncomfortable. George and Niel hated to look at Ivy, and yet his face had a kind of fascination for them. It was red, and the flesh looked hard, as if it were swollen from bee stings, or from an encounter with poison ivy. This nickname, however, was given him because it was well known that he had "made away" with several other dogs before he had poisoned the judge's friendly water spaniel. The boys said he took a dis-

like to a dog and couldn't rest until he made an end of him.

Ivy's red skin was flecked with tiny freckles, like rust spots, and in each of his hard cheeks there was a curly indentation, like a knot in a tree-bolt—two permanent dimples which did anything but soften his countenance. His eyes were very small, and an absence of eyelashes gave his pupils the fixed, unblinking hardness of a snake's or a lizard's. His hands had the same swollen look as his face, were deeply creased across the back and knuckles, as if the skin were stretched too tight. He was an ugly fellow, Ivy Peters, and he liked being ugly.

He began telling the boys that it was too hot to hunt now, but later he meant to steal down to the marsh, where the ducks came at sundown, and bag a few. "I can make off across the corn fields before the old cap sees me. He's not much on the run."

"He'll complain to your father."

"A whoop my father cares!" The speaker's restless eyes were looking up through the branches. "See that woodpecker tapping; don't mind us a bit. That's nerve!"

"They are protected here, so they're not afraid," said precise George.

"Humph! They'll spoil the old man's grove for him. That tree's full of holes already. Wouldn't he come down easy, now!"

Niel and George Adams sat up. "Don't you dare shoot here, you'll get us all into trouble."

"She'd come right down from the house," cried Ed Elliott.

"Let her come, stuck-up piece! Who's talking about shooting anyway? There's more ways of killing dogs than choking them with butter."

At this effrontery the boys shot amazed glances at one another, and the brown Weaver twins broke simultaneously into giggles and rolled over

on the turf. But Ivy seemed unaware that he was regarded as being especially resourceful where dogs were concerned. He drew from his pocket a metal sling-shot and some round bits of gravel. "I won't kill it. I'll just surprise it, so we can have a look at it."

"Bet you won't hit it!"

"Bet I will!" He fitted the stone to the leather, squinted, and let fly. Sure enough, the woodpecker dropped at his feet. He threw his heavy black-felt hat over it. Ivy never wore a straw hat, even in the hottest weather. "Now wait. He'll come to. You'll hear him flutter in a minute."

"It ain't a he, anyhow. It's a female. Anybody would know that," said Niel contemptuously, annoyed that this unpopular boy should come along and spoil their afternoon. He held the fate of his uncle's spaniel against Ivy Peters.

"All right, Miss Female," said Ivy carelessly, intent upon a project of his own. He took from his pocket a little red-leather box, and when he opened it the boys saw that it contained curious little instruments: tiny, sharp knife blades, hooks, curved needles, a saw, a blow pipe and scissors. "Some of these I got with a taxidermy outfit from the *Youth's Companion*, and some I made myself." He got stiffly down on his knees—his joints seemed disinclined to bend at all—and listened beside his hat. "She's as lively as a cricket," he announced. Thrusting his hand suddenly under the brim, he brought out the startled bird. It was not bleeding, and did not seem to be crippled.

"Now, you watch, and I'll show you something," said Ivy. He held the woodpecker's head in a vise made of his thumb and forefinger, inclosing its panting body with his palm. Quick as a flash, as if it were a practiced trick, with one of those tiny blades he slit

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both the eyes that glared in the bird's stupid little head, and instantly released it.

The woodpecker rose in the air with a whirling, corkscrew motion, darted to the right, struck a tree trunk—to the left, and struck another. Up and down, backward and forward among the tangle of branches it flew, raking its feathers, falling and recovering itself. The boys stood watching it, indignant and uncomfortable, not knowing what to do. They were not especially sensitive; Thad was always on hand when there was anything doing at the slaughter house, and the Blum boys lived by killing things. They wouldn't have believed they could be so upset by a hurt woodpecker. There was something wild and desperate about the way the darkened creature beat its wings in the branches, whirling in the sunlight and never seeing it, always thrusting its head up and shaking it, as a bird does when it is drinking. Presently it managed to get its feet on the same limb where it had been struck, and seemed to recognize that perch. As if it had learned something by its bruises, it pecked and crept its way along the branch and disappeared into its own hole.

"There!" Niel Herbert exclaimed between his teeth. "If I can get it now, I can kill it and put it out of its misery. Let me on your back, Rhein."

Rheinhold was the tallest, and he obediently bent his bony back. The trunk of a cottonwood tree is hard to climb; the bark is rough, and the branches begin a long way up. Niel tore his trousers and scratched his bare legs smartly before he got to the first fork. After recovering breath, he wound his way up toward the woodpecker's hole, which was inconveniently high. He was almost there, his companions below thought him quite safe, when he suddenly lost his balance, turned a somersault in the air, and

bumped down on the grass at their feet. There he lay without moving.

"Run for water!"

"Run for Mrs. Forrester! Ask her for whisky."

"No," said George Adams; "let's carry him up to the house. She will know what to do."

"That's sense," said Ivy Peters. As he was much bigger and stronger than any of the others, he lifted Niel's limp body and started up the hill. It had occurred to him that this would be a fine chance to get inside the Forresters' house and see what it was like, and this he had always wanted to do.

Mary, the cook, saw them coming from the kitchen window, and ran for her mistress. Captain Forrester was in Kansas City that day.

Mrs. Forrester came to the back door.

"What's happened? It's Niel, too! Bring him in this way, please."

Ivy Peters followed her, keeping his eyes open, and the rest trooped after him—all but the Blum boys, who knew that their place was outside the kitchen door. Mrs. Forrester led the way through the butler's pantry, the dining room, the back parlor, to her own bedroom. She threw down the white counterpane, and Ivy laid Niel upon the sheets. Mrs. Forrester was concerned, but not frightened.

"Mary, will you bring the brandy from the sideboard? George, telephone Doctor Dennison to come over at once. Now you other boys run out on the front porch and wait quietly. There are too many of you in here." She knelt by the bed, putting brandy between Niel's white lips with a teaspoon. The little boys withdrew, only Ivy Peters remained standing in the back parlor, just outside the bedroom door, his arms folded across his chest, taking in his surroundings with bold, unblinking eyes.

Mrs. Forrester glanced at him over her shoulder. "Will you wait on the porch, please? You are older than the others, and if anything is needed I can call on you."

Ivy cursed himself, but he had to go. There was something final about her imperious courtesy—high-and-mighty, he called it. He had intended to sit down in the biggest leather chair and cross his legs and make himself at home; but he found himself on the front porch, put out by that delicately modulated voice as effectually as if he had been kicked out by the brawniest tough in town.

Niel opened his eyes and looked wonderingly about the big, half-darkened room, full of heavy, old-fashioned walnut furniture. He was lying on a white bed with ruffled pillow shams, and Mrs. Forrester was kneeling beside him, bathing his forehead with cologne. Bohemian Mary stood behind her, with a basin of water. "Ouch, my arm!" he muttered, and the perspiration broke out on his face.

"Yes, dear, I'm afraid it's broken. Don't move. Doctor Dennison will be here in a few minutes. It doesn't hurt very much, does it?"

"No'm," he said faintly. He was in pain, but he felt weak and contented. The room was cool and dusky and quiet. At his house everything was horrid when one was sick. What soft fingers Mrs. Forrester had, and what a lovely lady she was. Inside the lace ruffle of her dress he saw her white throat rising and falling so quickly. Suddenly she got up to take off her glittering rings—she had not thought of them before—shed them off her fingers with a quick motion as if she were washing her hands, and dropped them into Mary's broad palm. The little boy was thinking that he would probably never be in so nice a place again. The windows went almost down to the baseboard, like doors, and the closed

green shutters let in streaks of sunlight that quivered on the polished floor and the silver things on the dresser. The heavy curtains were looped back with thick cords, like ropes. The marble-topped washstand was as big as a sideboard. The massive walnut furniture was all inlaid with pale-colored woods. Niel had a scroll-saw, and this inlay interested him.

"There, he looks better now, doesn't he, Mary?" Mrs. Forrester ran her fingers through his black hair and lightly kissed him on the forehead. Oh, how sweet, how sweet she smelled!

"Wheels on the bridge; it's Doctor Dennison. Go and show him in, Mary."

Doctor Dennison set Niel's arm and took him home in his buggy. Home was not a pleasant place to go to; a frail egg-shell house, set off on the edge of the prairie where people of no consequence lived. Except for the fact that he was Judge Pommeroy's nephew, Niel would have been one of the boys to whom Mrs. Forrester merely nodded brightly as she passed. His father was a widower. A poor relation, a spinster from Kentucky, kept house for them, and Niel thought she was probably the worst housekeeper in the world. Their house was usually full of washing in various stages of incompleteness—tubs sitting about with linen soaking—and the beds were "aired" until any hour in the afternoon when Cousin Sadie happened to think of making them up. She liked to sit down after breakfast and read murder trials, or peruse a well-worn copy of "St. Elmo." Sadie was a good-natured thing and was always running off to help a neighbor, but Niel hated to have any one come to see them. His father was at home very little, spent all his time at his office. He kept the county abstract books and made farm loans. Having lost his own property, he invested other people's money for them.

He was a gentle, agreeable man, young, good looking, with nice manners, but Niel felt there was an air of failure and defeat about his family. He clung to his maternal uncle, Judge Pommeroy, white-whiskered and portly, who was Captain Forrester's lawyer and a friend of all the great men who visited the Forresters. Niel was proud, like his mother; she died when he was five years old. She had hated the West, and used haughtily to tell her neighbors that she would never think of living anywhere but in Fayette County, Kentucky; that they had only come to Sweet Water to make investments and to "turn the crown into the pound." By that phrase she was still remembered, poor lady.

CHAPTER III.

For the next few years Niel saw very little of Mrs. Forrester. She was an excitement that came and went with summer. She and her husband always spent the winter in Denver and Colorado Springs—left Sweet Water soon after Thanksgiving and did not return until the first of May. He knew that Mrs. Forrester liked him, but she hadn't much time for growing boys. When she had friends staying with her, and gave a picnic supper for them, or a dance in the grove on a moonlight night, Niel was always invited. Coming and going along the road to the marsh with the Blum boys, he sometimes met the captain driving visitors over in the democrat wagon, and he heard about these people from "Black Tom," Judge Pommeroy's faithful negro servant, who went over to wait on the table for Mrs. Forrester when she had a dinner party.

Then came the accident which cut short the captain's career as a road builder. After that fall with his horse he lay ill at the Antlers, in Colorado Springs, all winter. In the summer,

when Mrs. Forrester brought him home to Sweet Water, he still walked with a cane. He had grown much heavier, seemed encumbered by his own bulk, and never suggested taking a contract for the railroad again. He was able to work in the garden, trimmed his snow-ball bushes and lilac hedges, devoted a great deal of time to growing roses. He and his wife still went away for the winter, but each year the period of their absence grew shorter.

All this while the town of Sweet Water was changing. Its future no longer looked bright. Successive crop failures had broken the spirit of the farmers, George Adams and his family had gone back to Massachusetts, disillusioned about the West. One by one the other gentlemen ranchers followed their example. The Forresters now had fewer visitors. The Burlington was "drawing in its horns," as people said, and the railroad officials were not stopping off at Sweet Water so often—were more inclined to hurry past a town where they had sunk money that would never come back.

Niel Herbert's father was one of the first failures to be crowded to the wall. He closed his little house, sent his cousin Sadie back to Kentucky, and went to Denver to accept an office position. He left Niel behind to read law in the office with his uncle. Not that Niel had any taste for the law, but he liked being with Judge Pommeroy, and he might as well stay there as anywhere, for the present. The few thousand dollars his mother had left him would not be his until he was twenty-one.

Niel fitted up a room for himself behind the suite which the judge retained for his law offices, on the second floor of the most pretentious brick block in town. There he lived with monastic cleanliness and severity, glad to be rid of his cousin and her inconsequential housewifery, and resolved to

remain a bachelor, like his uncle. He took care of the offices, which meant that he did the janitor work, and arranged them exactly to suit his taste, making the rooms so attractive that all the judge's friends, and especially Captain Forrester, dropped in there to talk oftener than ever.

The judge was proud of his nephew. Niel was now nineteen, a tall, straight, deliberate boy. His features were clear cut, his gray eyes, so dark that they looked black under his long lashes, were rather moody and challenging. The world did not seem overbright to young people just then. His reserve, which did not come from embarrassment or vanity, but from a critical habit of mind, made him seem older than he was, and a little cold.

One winter afternoon, only a few days before Christmas, Niel sat writing in the back office, at the long table where he usually worked or trifled, surrounded by the judge's fine law library and solemn steel engravings of statesmen and jurists. His uncle was at his desk in the front office, engaged in a friendly consultation with one of his country clients. Niel, greatly bored with the notes he was copying, was trying to invent an excuse for getting out on the street, when he became aware of light footsteps coming rapidly down the outside corridor. The door of the front office opened, he heard his uncle rise quickly to his feet, and, at the same moment, heard a woman's laugh—a soft, musical laugh which rose and descended like a suave scale. He turned in his screw chair so that he could look over his shoulder through the double doors into the front room. Mrs. Forrester stood there, shaking her muff at the judge and the bewildered Swede farmer. Her quick eye lighted upon a bottle of Bourbon and two glasses on the desk among the papers. "Is that the way you prepare your cases, judge? What an example for

Niel!" She peeped through the door and nodded to the boy as he rose.

He remained in the back room, however, watching her while she declined the chair the judge pushed toward her and made a sign of refusal when he politely pointed to the Bourbon. She stood beside his desk in her long seal-skin coat and cap, a crimson scarf showing above the collar, a little brown veil with spots tied over her eyes. The veil did not in the least obscure those beautiful eyes, dark and full of light, set under a low white forehead and arching eyebrows. The frosty air had brought no color to her cheeks—her skin had always the fragrant, crystalline whiteness of white lilacs. Mrs. Forrester looked at one, and one knew that she was bewitching. It was instantaneous, and it pierced the thickest hide. The Swede farmer was now grinning from ear to ear, and he, too, had shuffled to his feet. There could be no negative encounter, however slight, with Mrs. Forrester. If she merely bowed to you, merely looked at you, it constituted a personal relation. Something about her took hold of one in a flash; one became acutely conscious of her, of her fragility and grace of her mouth which could say so much without words; of her eyes, lively, laughing, intimate, nearly always a little mocking.

"Will you and Niel dine with us to-morrow evening, judge? And will you lend me Tom? We've just had a wire. The Ogdens are stopping over with us. They've been East to bring the girl home from school—she's had mumps or something. They want to get home for Christmas, but they will stop off for two days. Probably Frank Ellinger will come on from Denver."

"No prospect can afford me such pleasure as that of dining with Mrs. Forrester," said the judge ponderously.

"Thank you!" She bowed playfully and turned toward the double doors.

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"Niel, could you leave your work long enough to drive me home? Mr. Forrester has been detained at the bank."

Niel put on his wolfskin coat. Mrs. Forrester took him by his shaggy sleeve and went with him quickly down the long corridor and the narrow stairs to the street.

At the hitch bar stood her cutter, looking like a painted toy among the country sleds and wagons. Niel tucked the buffalo robes about Mrs. Forrester, untied the ponies, and sprang in beside her. Without direction the team started down the frozen main street, where few people were abroad, crossed the creek on the ice, and trotted up the poplar-bordered lane toward the house on the hill. The late afternoon sun burned on the snow-crueted pastures. The poplars looked very tall and straight, pinched up and severe in their winter poverty. Mrs. Forrester chatted to Niel with her face turned toward him, holding her muff up to break the wind.

"I'm counting on you to help me entertain Constance Ogden. Can you take her off my hands day after tomorrow—come over in the afternoon? Your duties as a lawyer aren't very arduous yet?" She smiled teasingly. "What can I do with a miss of nineteen? One who goes to college? I've no learned conversation for her!"

"Surely I haven't!" Niel exclaimed.

"Oh, but you're a boy! Perhaps you can interest her in lighter things. She's considered pretty."

"Do you think she is?"

"I haven't seen her lately. She was striking—china-blue eyes and heaps of yellow hair, not exactly yellow—what they call an ashen blond, I believe."

Niel had noticed that in describing the charms of other women Mrs. Forrester always made fun of them a little.

They drew up in front of the house. Ben Keezer came round from the kitchen to take the team.

"You are to go back for Mr. Forrester at six, Ben. Niel, come in for a moment and get warm." She drew him through the little storm entry, which protected the front door in winter, into the hall. "Hang up your coat and come along." He followed her through the parlor into the sitting room, where a little coal grate was burning under the black mantelpiece, and sat down in the big leather chair in which Captain Forrester dozed after his mid-day meal. It was a rather dark room, with walnut bookcases that had carved tops and glass doors. The floor was covered by a red carpet, and the walls were hung with large, old-fashioned engravings; "The House of the Poet on the Last Day of Pompeii," "Shakespeare Reading before Queen Elizabeth."

Mrs. Forrester left him and presently returned carrying a tray with a decanter and sherry glasses. She put it down on her husband's smoking table, poured out a glass for Niel and one for herself, and perched on the arm of one of the stuffed chairs, where she sat sipping her sherry and stretching her tiny, silver-buckled slippers out toward the glowing coals.

"It's so nice to have you staying on until after Christmas," Niel observed. "You've only been here one other Christmas since I can remember."

"I'm afraid we're staying on all winter this year. Mr. Forrester thinks we can't afford to go away. For some reason, we are extraordinarily poor just now."

"Like everybody else," the boy commented grimly.

"Yes, like everybody else. However, it does no good to be glum about it, does it?" She refilled the two glasses. "I always take a little sherry at this time in the afternoon. At Colorado Springs some of my friends take tea, like the English. But I should feel like an old woman, drinking tea!

Besides, sherry is good for my throat." Niel remembered some legend about a weak chest and occasional terrifying hemorrhages. But that seemed doubtful, as one looked at her—fragile, indeed, but with such light, effervescing vitality. "Perhaps I do seem old to you, Niel; quite old enough for tea and a cap!"

He smiled gravely. "You seem always the same to me, Mrs. Forrester."

"Yes? And how is that?"

"Lovely. Just lovely."

As she bent forward to put down her glass she patted his cheek. "Oh, you'll do very well for Constance!" Then, seriously, "I'm glad if I do, though. I want you to like me well enough to come to see us often this winter. You shall come with your uncle to make a fourth at whist. Mr. Forrester must have his whist in the evening. Do you think he is looking any worse, Niel? It frightens me to see him getting a little uncertain. But there, we must believe in good luck!" She took up the half-empty glass and held it against the light.

Niel liked to see the firelight sparkle on her earrings, long pendants of garnets and seed pearls in the shape of fleurs-de-lys. She was the only woman he knew who wore earrings; they hung naturally against her thin, triangular cheeks. Captain Forrester, although he had given her handsomer ones, liked to see her wear these, because they had been his mother's. It gratified him to have his wife wear jewels; it meant something to him. She never left off her beautiful rings unless she was in the kitchen.

"A winter in the country may do him good," said Mrs. Forrester, after a silence during which she looked intently into the fire, as if she were trying to read the outcome of their difficulties there. "He loves this place so much. But you and Judge Pom-

meroy must keep an eye on him when he is in town, Niel. If he looks tired or uncertain, make some excuse and bring him home. He can't carry a drink or two as he used." She glanced over her shoulder to see that the door into the dining room was shut. "Once last winter he had been drinking with some old friends at the Antlers—nothing unusual, just as he always did, as a man must be able to do—but it was too much for him. When he came out to join me in the carriage, coming down that long walk, you know, he fell. There was no ice; he didn't slip. It was simply because he was unsteady. He had trouble getting up. I still shiver to think of it. To me, it was as if one of the mountains had fallen down."

A little later Niel went plunging down the hill, looking exultantly into the streak of red sunset. Oh, the winter would not be so bad, this year! How strange that she should be here at all, a woman like her among common people! Not even in Denver had he ever seen another woman so elegant. He had sat in the dining room of the Brown Palace Hotel and watched them as they came down to dinner—fashionable women from the East, on their way to California. But he had never found one so attractive and distinguished as Mrs. Forrester. Compared with her, other women were heavy and dull; even the pretty ones seemed lifeless—they had not that something in their glance that made one's blood tingle. And never elsewhere had he heard anything like her inviting, musical laugh, that was like the distant measures of dance music, heard through opening and shutting doors.

He could remember the very first time he ever saw Mrs. Forrester, when he was a little boy. He had been loitering in front of the Episcopal church one Sunday morning, when a low carriage drove up to the door. Ben Keezer

was on the front seat, and on the back seat was a lady, alone, in a black silk dress all puffs and ruffles, and a black hat, carrying a parasol with a carved ivory handle. As the carriage stopped she lifted her dress to alight; out of a swirl of foamy white petticoats she thrust a black, shiny slipper. She stepped lightly to the ground and with a nod to the driver went into the church. The little boy followed her through the open door, saw her enter a pew and kneel. He was proud now that at the first moment he had recognized her as belonging to a different world from any he had ever known.

Niel paused for a moment at the end of the lane to look up at the last skeleton poplar in the long row; just above its pointed tip hung the hollow, silver, winter moon.

CHAPTER IV.

In pleasant weather Judge Pommeroy walked to the Forresters', but on the occasion of the dinner for the Ogdens he engaged the liveryman to take him and his nephew over in one of the town hacks—vehicles seldom used except for funerals and weddings. They smelled strongly of the stable and contained lap robes as heavy as lead and as slipperiness as oiled paper. Niel and his uncle were the only townspeople asked to the Forresters' that evening; they rolled over the creek and up the hill in state, and emerged covered with horsehair.

Captain Forrester met them at the door, his burly figure buttoned up in a frock coat, a flat collar and black string tie under the heavy folds of his neck. He was always clean-shaven except for a drooping, dun-colored mustache. The company stood behind him laughing while Niel caught up the whisk broom and began dusting roan hairs off his uncle's broadcloth. Mrs. Forrester gave Niel a brushing in turn and then took him into the parlor and

introduced him to Mrs. Ogden and her daughter.

The daughter was a rather pretty girl, Niel thought, in a pale-pink evening dress which left bare her smooth arms and short, dimpled neck. Her eyes were, as Mrs. Forrester had said, a china blue, rather prominent and inexpressive. Her fleece of ashy-gold hair was bound about her head with silver bands. In spite of her fresh, roselike complexion, her face was not altogether agreeable. Two dissatisfied lines reached from the corners of her short nose to the corners of her mouth. When she was displeased, even a little, these lines tightened, drew her nose back, and gave her a suspicious, injured expression. Niel sat down by her and did his best, but he found her hard to talk to. She seemed nervous and distracted, kept glancing over her shoulder, and crushing her handkerchief up in her hands. Her mind, clearly, was elsewhere. After a few moments he turned to the mother, who was more easily interested.

Mrs. Ogden was almost unpardonably homely. She had a pear-shaped face, and across her high forehead lay a row of flat, dry curls. Her bluish-brown skin was almost the color of her violet dinner dress. A diamond necklace glittered about her wrinkled throat. Unlike Constance, she seemed thoroughly amiable, but as she talked she tilted her head and "used" her eyes, availing herself of those arch glances which he had supposed only pretty women indulged in. Probably she had long been surrounded by people to whom she was an important personage, and had acquired the manner of a spoiled darling. Niel thought her rather foolish at first, but in a few moments he had got used to her mannerisms and began to like her. He found himself laughing heartily and forgot the discouragement of his failure with the daughter.

Mr. Ogden, a short, weather-beaten man of fifty, with a cast in one eye, a stiff imperial, and twisted mustaches, was noticeably quieter and less expansive than when Niel had met him here on former occasions. He seemed to expect his wife to do the talking. When Mrs. Forrester addressed him, or passed near him, his good eye twinkled and followed her, while the eye that looked askance remained unchanged and committed itself to nothing.

Suddenly every one became more lively; the air warmed, and the lamp-light seemed to brighten, as a fourth member of the Denver party came in from the dining room with a glittering tray full of cocktails he had been making. Frank Ellinger was a bachelor of forty, six feet two, with long straight legs, fine shoulders, and a figure that still permitted his white waistcoat to button without a wrinkle under his conspicuously well-cut dinner coat. His black hair, coarse and curly as the filling of a mattress, was gray about the ears, his florid face showed little purple veins about his beaked nose—a nose like the prow of a ship, with long nostrils. His chin was deeply cleft, his thick, curly lips seemed very muscular, very much under his control, and, with his strong white teeth, irregular and curved, gave him the look of a man who could bite an iron rod in two with a snap of his jaws. His whole figure seemed very much alive under his clothes, with a restless, muscular energy that had something of the cruelty of wild animals in it. Niel was very much interested in this man, the hero of many ambiguous stories. He didn't know whether he liked him or not. He knew nothing bad about him, but he felt something evil.

The cocktails were the signal for general conversation, the company drew together in one group. Even Miss Constance seemed less dissatisfied. Ellinger

drank his cocktail standing beside her chair, and offered her the cherry in his glass. They were old-fashioned whisky cocktails. Nobody drank Martinis then; gin was supposed to be the consolation of sailors and inebriate scrubwomen.

"Very good, Frank, very good," Captain Forrester pronounced, drawing out 'a fresh, cologne-scented handkerchief to wipe his mustache. "Are encores in order?" The captain puffed slightly when he talked. His eyes, always somewhat suffused and bloodshot since his injury, blinked at his friends from under his heavy lids.

"One more round for everybody, captain." Ellinger brought in from the sideboard a capacious shaker and refilled all the glasses except Miss Ogden's. At her he shook his finger, and offered her the little dish of maraschino cherries.

"No, I don't want those. I want the one in your glass," she said with a pouty smile. "I like it to taste of something!"

"Constance!" said her mother reprovingly, rolling her eyes at Mrs. Forrester, as if to share with her the charm of such innocence.

"Niel," Mrs. Forrester laughed, "won't you give the child your cherry, too?"

Niel promptly crossed the room and proffered the cherry in the bottom of his glass. She took it with her thumb and forefinger and dropped it into her own—where, he was quick to observe, she left it when they went out to dinner. A stubborn piece of pink flesh, he decided, and certainly a fool about a man quite old enough to be her father. He sighed when he saw that he was placed next her at the dinner table.

Captain Forrester still made a commanding figure at the head of his own table, with his napkin tucked under his chin and the work of carving well in

hand. Nobody could lay bare the bones of a brace of duck or a twenty-pound turkey more deftly. "What part of the turkey do you prefer, Mrs. Ogden?" If one had a preference, it was gratified, with all the stuffing and gravy that went with it, and the vegetables properly placed. When a plate left Captain Forrester's hands, it was a dinner; the recipient was served, and well served. He served Mrs. Forrester last of the ladies but before the men, and to her, too, he said, "Mrs. Forrester, what part of the turkey shall I give you this evening?" He was a man who did not vary his formulas or his manners. He was no more mobile than his countenance. Niel and Judge Pommeroy had often remarked how much Captain Forrester looked like the pictures of Grover Cleveland. His clumsy dignity covered a deep nature, and a conscience that had never been juggled with. His repose was like that of a mountain. When he laid his fleshy, thick-fingered hand upon a frantic horse, an hysterical woman, an Irish workman out for blood, he brought them peace; something they could not resist. That had been the secret of his management of men. His sanity asked nothing, claimed nothing; it was so simple that it brought a hush over distracted creatures. In the old days, when he was building road in the Black Hills, trouble sometimes broke out in camp when he was absent, staying with Mrs. Forrester at Colorado Springs. He would put down the telegram that announced an insurrection and say to his wife: "Maidy, I must go to the men." And that was all he did—he went to them.

While the captain was intent upon his duties as host he talked very little, and Judge Pommeroy and Ellinger kept a lively cross-fire of amusing stories going. Niel, sitting opposite Ellinger, watched him closely. He still couldn't decide whether he liked him or not.

In Denver Frank was known as a prince of good fellows; tactful, generous, resourceful, though apt to trim his sails to the wind; a man who good-humoredly bowed to the inevitable, or to the almost inevitable. He had, when he was younger, been notoriously "wild," but that was not held against him, even by mothers with marriageable daughters, like Mrs. Ogden. Morals were different in those days. Niel had heard his uncle refer to Ellinger's youthful infatuation with a woman called Nell Emerald, a handsome and rather unusual woman. Nell Emerald had told an old clubman that, though she had been out behind young Ellinger's new trotting horse, she "had no respect for a man who would go driving with her in broad daylight." This story and a dozen like it were often related of Ellinger, and the women laughed over them as heartily as the men. All the while that he was making a scandalous chronicle for himself, young Ellinger had been devotedly caring for an invalid mother, and he was described to strangers as a terribly fast young man and a model son. That combination pleased the taste of the time. Nobody thought the worse of him. Now that his mother was dead, he lived at the Brown Palace Hotel, though he still kept her house at Colorado Springs.

When the roast was well under way, Black Tom, very formal in a white waistcoat and high collar, poured the champagne. Captain Forrester lifted his glass, the frail stem between his thick fingers, and glancing round the table at his guests and at Mrs. Forrester, said:

"Happy days!"

It was the toast he always drank at dinner, the invocation he was sure to utter when he took a glass of whisky with an old friend. Whoever had heard him say it once, liked to hear him say it again. Nobody else could utter those two words as he did, with

such gravity and high courtesy. It seemed a solemn moment, seemed to knock at the door of Fate, behind which all days, happy and otherwise, were hidden. Niel drank his wine with a pleasant shiver, thinking that nothing else made life seem so precarious, the future so cryptic and unfathomable, as that brief toast uttered by the massive man. "Happy days!"

Mrs. Ogden turned to the host with her most languishing smile.

"Captain Forrester, I want you to tell Constance"—she was an East Virginia woman, and what she really said was: "Cap'n Forrester, Ah wan' yew to tell," etc. Her vowels seemed to roll about in the same way her eyes did—"I want you to tell Constance about how you first found this lovely spot, 'way back in Indian times."

The captain looked down the table between the candles at Mrs. Forrester, as if to consult her. She smiled and nodded, and her beautiful earrings swung beside her pale cheeks. She was wearing her diamonds to-night, and a black-velvet gown. Her husband had archaic ideas about jewels; a man bought them for his wife in acknowledgment of things he could not gracefully utter. They must be costly; they must show that he was able to buy them, and that she was worthy to wear them.

With her approval the captain began his narrative: a concise account of how he came West a young boy, after serving in the Civil War, and took a job as driver for a freighting company that carried supplies across the plains from Nebraska City to Cherry Creek, as Denver was then called. The freighters, after embarking in that sea of grass six hundred miles in width, lost all count of the days of the week and the month. One day was like another, and all were glorious; good hunting, plenty of antelope and buffalo, boundless sunny sky, boundless plains

of waving grass, long fresh-water lagoons yellow with lagoon flowers, where the bison in their periodic migrations stopped to drink and bathe and wallow.

"An ideal life for a young man," the captain pronounced. Once, when he was driven out of the trail by a wash-out, he rode south on his horse to explore, and found an Indian encampment near the Sweet Water, on this very hill where his house now stood. He was, he said, "greatly taken with the location," and made up his mind that he would one day have a house there. He cut down a young willow tree and drove the stake into the ground to mark the spot where he wished to build. He went away and did not come back for many years; he was helping to lay the first railroad across the plains.

"There were those that were dependent on me," he said. "I had sickness to contend with, and responsibilities. But in all those years I expect there was hardly a day passed that I did not remember the Sweet Water and this hill. When I came here a young man, I had planned it in my mind, pretty much as it is to-day; where I would dig my well, and where I would plant my grove and my orchard. I planned to build a house that my friends could come to, with a wife like Mrs. Forrester to make it attractive to them. I used to promise myself that some day I would manage it." This part of the story the captain told not with embarrassment, but with reserve, choosing his words slowly, absently cracking English walnuts with his strong fingers and heaping a little hoard of kernels beside his plate. His friends understood that he was referring to his first marriage, to the poor invalid wife who had never been happy and who had kept his nose to the grindstone.

"When things looked most discourag-

ing," he went on, "I came back here once and bought the place from the railroad company. They took my note. I found my willow stake—it had rooted and grown into a tree—and I planted three more to mark the corners of my house. Twelve years later Mrs. Forrester came here with me, shortly after our marriage, and we built our house." Captain Forrester puffed from time to time, but his clear account commanded attention. Something in the way he uttered his unornamented phrases gave them the impressiveness of inscriptions cut in stone.

Mrs. Forrester nodded at him from her end of the table. "And now, tell us your philosophy of life—this is where it comes in," she laughed teasingly.

The captain coughed and looked abashed. "I was intending to omit that to-night. Some of our guests have already heard it."

"No, no. It belongs at the end of the story, and if some of us have heard it, we can hear it again. Go on!"

"Well, then, my philosophy is that what you think of and plan for day by day, in spite of yourself, so to speak—you will get. You will get it more or less. That is, unless you are one of the people who get nothing in this world. There are such people. I have lived too much in mining works and construction camps not to know that." He paused as if, though this was too dark a chapter to be gone into, it must have its place, its moment of silent recognition. "If you are not one of those, Constance and Niel, you will accomplish what you dream of most."

"And why? That's the interesting part of it," his wife prompted him.

"Because"—he roused himself from his abstraction and looked about at the company—"because a thing that is dreamed of in the way I mean is already an accomplished fact. All our great West has been developed from

such dreams; the homesteader's and the prospector's and the contractor's. We dreamed the railroads across the mountains, just as I dreamed my place on the Sweet Water. All these things will be everyday facts to the coming generation, but to us——" Captain Forrester ended with a sort of grunt. Something forbidding had come into his voice, the lonely, defiant note that is so often heard in the voices of old Indians.

Mrs. Ogden had listened to the story with such sympathy that Niel liked her better than ever, and even the pre-occupied Constance seemed able to give it her attention. They rose from the dessert and went into the parlor to arrange the card tables. The captain still played whist as well as ever. As he brought out a box of his best cigars, he paused before Mrs. Ogden and said, "Is smoke offensive to you, Mrs. Ogden?" When she protested that it was not, he crossed the room to where Constance was talking with Ellinger and asked with the same grave courtesy, "Is smoke offensive to you, Constance?" Had there been half a dozen women present, he would have asked that question of each, probably, and in the same words. It did not bother him to repeat a phrase. If an expression answered his purpose, he saw no reason for varying it.

Mrs. Forrester and Mr. Ogden were to play against Mrs. Ogden and the captain. "Constance," said Mrs. Forrester as she sat down, "will you play with Niel? I'm told he's very good."

Miss Ogden's short nose flickered up, the lines on either side of it deepened, and she again looked injured. Niel was sure she detested him. He was not going to be done in by her.

"Miss Ogden," he said as he stood beside his chair, deliberately shuffling a pack of cards, "my uncle and I are used to playing together, and probably you are used to playing with Mr. Ellin-

ger. Suppose we try that combination?"

She gave him a quick, suspicious glance from under her yellow eyelashes and flung herself into a chair without so much as answering him. Frank Ellinger came in from the dining room, where he had been sampling the captain's French brandy, and took the vacant seat opposite Miss Ogden.

"So it's you and me, Connie? Good enough!" he exclaimed, cutting the pack Niel pushed toward him.

Just before midnight Black Tom opened the door and announced that the eggnog was ready. The card players went into the dining room, where the punch bowl stood smoking on the table.

"Constance," said Captain Forrester, "do you sing? I like to hear one of the old songs with the eggnog."

"Ah'm sorry, Cap'n Forrester. Ah really haven't any voice."

Niel noticed that whenever Constance spoke to the captain she strained her throat, though he wasn't in the least deaf. He broke in over her refusal.

"Uncle can start a song if you coax him, sir."

Judge Pommeroy, after smoothing his silver whiskers and coughing, began "Auld Lang Syne." The others joined in, but they hadn't got to the end of it when a hollow rumbling down on the bridge made them laugh, and every one ran to the front windows to see the judge's funeral coach come lurching up the hill, with only one of the side lanterns lit. Mrs. Forrester sent Tom out with a drink for the driver. While Niel and his uncle were putting on their overcoats in the hall, she came up to them and whispered coaxingly to the boy, "Remember, you are coming over to-morrow, at two? I am planning a drive, and I want you to amuse Constance for me."

Niel bit his lip and looked down into

Mrs. Forrester's laughing, persuasive eyes.

"I'll do it for you, but that's the only reason," he said threateningly.

"I understand, for me! I'll credit it to your account."

The judge and his nephew rolled away on swaying springs. The Ogdens retired to their rooms upstairs. Mrs. Forrester went to help the captain divest himself of his frock coat, and put it away for him. Ever since he was hurt he had to be propped high on pillows at night, and he slept in a narrow iron bed, in the alcove which had formerly been his wife's dressing room. While he was undressing he breathed heavily and sighed, as if he were very tired. He fumbled with his studs, then blew on his fingers and tried again. His wife came to his aid and quickly unbuttoned everything. He did not thank her in words, but submitted gratefully.

When the iron bed creaked at receiving his heavy figure, she called from the big bedroom, "Good night, Mr. Forrester," and drew the heavy curtains that shut off the alcove. She took off her rings and earrings and was beginning to unfasten her black-velvet bodice when, at a tinkle of glass from without, she stopped short. Rehooking the shoulder of her gown, she went to the dining room, now faintly lit by the coal fire in the back parlor. Frank Ellinger was standing at the sideboard, taking a nightcap. The Forrester French brandy was old, and heavy like a cordial.

"Be careful," she murmured as she approached him, "I have a distinct impression that there is some one on the inclosed stairway. There is a wide crack in the door. Ah, but kittens have claws, these days! Pour me just a little. Thank you. I'll have mine in by the fire."

He followed her into the next room, where she stood by the grate, looking

at him in the light of the pale-blue flames that ran over the fresh coal, put on to keep the fire.

"You've had a good many brandies, Frank," she said, studying his flushed, masterful face.

"Not too many. I'll need them—to-night," he replied meaningly.

She nervously brushed back a lock of hair that had come down a little. "It's not to-night. It's morning. Go to bed and sleep as late as you please. Take care, I heard silk stockings on the stairs. Good night." She put her hand on the sleeve of his coat; the white fingers clung to the black cloth as bits of paper cling to magnetized iron. Her touch, soft as it was, went through the man, all the feet and inches of him. His broad shoulders lifted on a deep breath. He looked down at her.

Her eyes fell. "Good night," she said faintly. As she turned quickly away, the train of her velvet dress caught the leg of his broadcloth trousers and dragged with a friction that crackled and threw sparks. Both started. They stood looking at each other for a moment before she actually slipped through the door. Ellinger remained by the hearth, his arms folded tight over his chest, his curly lips compressed, frowning into the fire.

CHAPTER V.

Niel went up the hill the next afternoon, just as the cutter with the two black ponies jingled round the driveway and stopped at the front door. Mrs. Forrester came out on the porch, dressed for a sleigh ride. Ellinger followed her, buttoned up in a long, fur-lined coat, showily befrogged down the front, with a glossy astrakhan collar. He looked even more powerful and bursting with vigor than last night. His highly colored, well-visored countenance shone with a good opinion of himself and of the world.

Mrs. Forrester called to Niel gayly: "We are going down to the Sweet Water to cut cedar boughs for Christmas. Will you keep Constance company? She seems a trifle disappointed at being left behind, but we can't take the big sleigh—the pole is broken. Be nice to her, there's a good boy!" She pressed his hand, gave him a meaning, confidential smile, and stepped into the sleigh. Ellinger sprang in beside her, and they glided down the hill with a merry tinkle of sleighbells.

Niel found Miss Ogden in the back parlor, playing solitaire by the fire. She was clearly out of humor.

"Come in, Mr. Herbert. I think they might have taken us along, don't you? I want to see the river my own self. I hate bein' shut up in the house!"

"Let's go out, then. Wouldn't you like to see the town?"

Constance seemed not to hear him. She was wrinkling and unwrinkling her short nose, and the restless lines about her mouth were fluttering.

"What's to hinder us from getting a sleigh at the livery barn and going down to the Sweet Water? I don't suppose the river's private property?" She gave a nervous, angry laugh and looked hopefully at Niel.

"We couldn't get anything at this hour. The livery teams are all out."

Constance glanced at him suspiciously, then sat down at the card table and leaned over it, drawing her plump shoulders together. Her fluffy yellow hair was wound round her head like a scarf and held in place by narrow bands of black velvet.

The ponies had crossed the second creek and were trotting down the high road toward the river. Mrs. Forrester expressed her feelings in a laugh full of mischief.

"Is she running after us? Where did she get the idea that she was to come?"

What a relief to get away!" She lifted her chin and sniffed the air. The day was gray, without sun, and the air was still and dry, a warm cold. "Poor Mr. Ogden," she went on, "how much livelier he is without his ladies! They almost extinguish him. Now aren't you glad you never married?"

"I'm certainly glad I never married a homely woman. What does a man do it for, anyway? She had no money—and he's always had it, or been on the way to it."

"Well, they're off to-morrow. And Connie! You've reduced her to a state of imbecility, really! What an afternoon Niel must be having!" She laughed as if the idea of his predicament delighted her.

"Who's this kid, anyway?" Ellinger asked her to take the reins for a moment while he drew a cigar from his pocket. "He's a trifle stiff. Does he make himself useful?"

"Oh, he's a nice boy, stranded here like the rest of us. I'm going to train him to be very useful. He's devoted to Mr. Forrester. Handsome, don't you think?"

"So-so." They turned into a by-road that wound along the Sweet Water. Ellinger held the ponies in a little and turned down his high astrakhan collar. "Let's have a look at you, Marian."

Mrs. Forrester was holding her muff before her face, to catch the flying particles of snow the ponies kicked up. From behind it she glanced at him sidewise.

"Well?" she said teasingly.

He put his arm through hers and settled himself low in the sleigh. "You ought to look at me better than that. It's been a devil of a long while since I've seen you."

"Perhaps it's been too long," she murmured. The mocking spark in her eyes softened perceptibly under the

long pressure of his arm. "Yes, it's been long," she admitted lightly.

"You didn't answer the letter I wrote you on the eleventh."

"Didn't I? Well, at any rate I answered your telegram." She drew her head away as his face came nearer. "You'll really have to watch the ponies, my dear, or they'll tumble us out in the snow."

"I don't care. I wish they would!" he said between his teeth. "Why didn't you answer my letter?"

"Oh, I don't remember! You don't write so many."

"It's no satisfaction. You won't let me write you love letters. You say it's risky."

"So it is, and foolish. But now you needn't be so careful. Not too careful!" she laughed softly. "When I'm off in the country for a whole winter, alone, and growing older, I like to"—she put her hand on his—"to be reminded of pleasanter things."

Ellinger took off his glove with his teeth. His eyes, sweeping the winding road and the low, snow-covered bluffs, had something wolfish in them.

"Be careful, Frank. My rings! You hurt me!"

"Then why didn't you take them off? You used to. Are these your cedars? Shall we stop here?"

"No, not here." She spoke very low. "The best ones are farther on, in a deep ravine that winds back into the hills."

Ellinger glanced at her averted head, and his heavy lips twitched in a smile at one corner. The quality of her voice had changed, and he knew the change. They went spinning along the curves of the winding road, saying not a word. Mrs. Forrester sat with her head bent forward, her face half hidden in her muff. At last she told him to stop. To the right of the road he saw a thicket. Behind it a dry watercourse wound into the bluffs. The tops of

the dark, still cedars, just visible from the road, indicated its windings.

"Sit still," he said, "while I take out the horses."

When the blue shadows of approaching dusk were beginning to fall over the snow, one of the Blum boys, slipping quietly along through the timber in search of rabbits, came upon the empty cutter standing in the brush, and near it the two ponies, stamping impatiently where they were tied. Adolph slid back into the thicket and lay down behind a fallen log to see what would happen. Not much ever happened to him but weather.

Presently he heard low voices, coming nearer from the ravine. The big stranger who was visiting at the Forrester's emerged, carrying the buffalo robes on one arm; Mrs. Forrester herself was clinging to the other. They walked slowly, wholly absorbed by what they were saying to each other. When they came up to the sleigh, the man spread the robes on the seat and put his hands under Mrs. Forrester's arms to lift her in. But he did not lift her; he stood for a long while holding her crushed up against his breast, her face hidden in his black overcoat.

"What about those damned cedar boughs?" he asked, after he had put her in and covered her up. "Shall I go back and cut some?"

"It doesn't matter," she murmured.

He reached under the seat for a hatchet and went back to the ravine. Mrs. Forrester sat with her eyes closed, her cheek pillowed on her muff, a faint, soft smile on her lips. The air was still and blue; the Blum boy could almost hear her breathe. When the strokes of the hatchet rang out from the ravine, he could see her eyelids flutter; soft shivers went through her body.

The man came back and threw the

evergreens into the sleigh. When he got in beside her, she slipped her hand through his arm and settled softly against him.

"Drive slowly," she murmured, as if she were talking in her sleep. "It doesn't matter if we are late for dinner. Nothing matters." The ponies trotted off.

The pale Blum boy rose from behind his log and followed the tracks up the ravine. When the orange moon rose over the bluffs, he was still sitting under the cedars, his gun on his knee. While Mrs. Forrester had been waiting there in the sleigh, with her eyes closed, feeling so safe, he could almost have touched her with his hand. He had never seen her before when her mocking eyes and lively manner were not between her and all the world. If it had been Thad Grimes who lay behind that log, now, or Ivy Peters?

But with Adolph Blum her secrets were safe. His mind was feudal; the rich and fortunate were also the privileged. These warm-blooded, quick-breathing people took chances, followed impulses only dimly understandable to a boy who was wet and weather-chapped all the year; who waded in the mud fishing for cat, or lay in the marsh waiting for wild duck. Mrs. Forrester had never been too haughty to smile at him when he came to the back door with his fish. She never haggled about the price. She treated him like a human being. His little chats with her, her nod and smile when she passed him on the street, were among the pleasantest things he had to remember. She bought game of him in the closed season, and didn't give him away.

CHAPTER VI.

It was during that winter, the first one Mrs. Forrester had ever spent in the house on the hill, that Niel came to know her very well. For the For-

resters that winter was a sort of isthmus between two estates; soon afterward came a change in their fortunes. And for Niel it was a natural turning point, since in the autumn he was nineteen, and in the spring he was twenty—a very great difference.

After the Christmas festivities were over, the whist parties settled into a regular routine. Three evenings a week Judge Pommeroy and his nephew sat down to cards with the Forresters. Sometimes they went over early and dined there. Sometimes they stayed for a late supper after the last rubber. Niel, who had been so content with a bachelor's life, and who had made up his mind that he would never live in a place that was under the control of women, found himself becoming attached to the comforts of a well-conducted house; to the pleasures of the table, to the soft chairs and soft lights and agreeable human voices at the Forresters'. On bitter, windy nights, sitting in his favorite blue chair before the grate, he used to wonder how he could manage to tear himself away, to plunge into the outer darkness, and run down the long frozen road and up the dead street of the town. Captain Forrester was experimenting with bulbs that winter, and had built a little glass conservatory on the south side of the house, off the back parlor. Through January and February the house was full of narcissus and Roman hyacinths, and their heavy, springlike odor made a part of the enticing comfort of the fireside there.

Where Mrs. Forrester was, dullness was impossible, Niel believed. The charm of her conversation was not so much in what she said, though she was often witty, but in the quick recognition of her eyes, in the living quality of her voice itself. One could talk with her about the most trivial things, and go away with a high sense of elation. The secret of it, he supposed,

was that she couldn't help being interested in people, even very commonplace people. If Mr. Ogden or Mr. Dalzell were not there to tell their best stories for her, then she could be amused by Ivy Peters' ruffianly manners, or the soft compliments of old man Elliott when he sold her a pair of winter shoes. She had a fascinating gift of mimicry. When she mentioned the fat iceman, or Thad Grimes at his meat block, or the Blum boys with their dead rabbits, by a subtle suggestion of their manner she made them seem more individual and vivid than they were in their own person. She often caricatured people to their faces, and they were not offended, but greatly flattered. Nothing pleased one more than to provoke her laughter. Then you felt you were getting on with her. It was her form of commenting, of agreeing with you and appreciating you when you said something interesting—and it often told you a great deal that was both too direct and too elusive for words.

Long, long afterward, when Niel did not know whether Mrs. Forrester were living or dead, if her image flashed into his mind, it came with a brightness of dark eyes, her pale, triangular cheeks with long earrings, and her many-colored laugh. When he was dull, dull and tired of everything, he used to think that, if he could hear that long-lost lady laugh again, he could be gay.

The big storm of the winter came late that year; swept down over Sweet Water the first day of March and beat upon the town for three days and nights. Thirty inches of snow fell, and the cutting wind blew it into whirling drifts. The Forresters were snowed in. Ben Keezer, their man of all work, did not attempt to break a road or even to come over to the town himself. On the third day Niel went to the post office, got the captain's leather mail sack with its accumulation of let-

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ters, and set off across the creek, plunging into drifts up to his middle, sometimes up to the arm pits. The fences along the lane were covered, but he broke his trail by keeping between the two lines of poplars. When at last he reached the front porch, Captain Forrester came to the door and let him in.

"Glad to see you, my boy, very glad. It's been a little lonesome for us. You must have had hard work getting over. I certainly appreciate it. Come to the sitting-room fire and dry yourself. We will talk quietly. Mrs. Forrester has gone upstairs to lie down; she's been complaining of a headache."

Niel stood before the fire in his rubber boots, drying his trousers. The captain did not sit down but opened the glass door into his little conservatory.

"I've something pretty to show you, Niel. All my hyacinths are coming along at once, every color of the rainbow. The Roman hyacinths, I say, are Mrs. Forrester's. They seem to suit her."

Niel went to the door and looked with keen pleasure at the fresh, watery blossoms.

"I was afraid you might lose them this bitter weather, captain."

"No, these things can stand a good deal of cold. They've been company for us." He stood looking out through the glass at the drifted shrubbery. Niel liked to see him look out over his place. "A man's house is his castle," his look seemed to say. "Ben tells me the rabbits have come up to the barn to eat the hay, everything green is covered up. I had him throw a few cabbages out for them, so they won't suffer. Mrs. Forrester has been on the porch every day, feeding the snow birds," he went on, as if talking to himself.

The stair door opened, and Mrs. Forrester came down in her Japanese dressing gown, looking very pale. The

dark shadows under her eyes seemed to mean that she had been losing sleep.

"Oh, it's Niel! How nice of you. And you've brought the mail. Are there any letters for me?"

"Three. Two from Denver and one from California." Her husband gave them to her. "Did you sleep, Maily?"

"No, but I rested. It's delightful up in the west room, the wind sings and whistles about the eaves. If you'll excuse me, I'll dress and glance at my letters. Stand closer to the fire, Niel. Are you very wet?" When she stopped beside him to feel his clothes, he smelled a sharp odor of spirits. Was she ill, he wondered, or merely so bored that she had been trying to dull herself?

When she came back she had dressed and rearranged her hair.

"Mrs. Forrester," said the captain in a solicitous tone, "I believe I would like some tea and toast this afternoon, like your English friends, and it would be good for your head. We won't offer Niel anything else."

"Very well. Mary has gone to bed with a toothache, but I will make the tea. Niel can make the toast here by the fire while you read your paper."

She was cheerful now—tied one of Mary's aprons about Niel's neck and set him down with the toasting fork. He noticed that the captain, as he read his paper, kept his eye on the sideboard with a certain watchfulness, and when his wife brought the tray with tea, and no sherry, he seemed very much pleased. He drank three cups, and took a second piece of toast.

"You see, Mr. Forrester," she said lightly, "Niel has brought back my appetite. I ate no lunch to-day"—turning to the boy—"I've been shut up too long. Is there anything in the papers?"

This meant was there any news concerning the people they knew. The captain put on his silver-rimmed glasses again and read aloud about the doings

of their friends in Denver and Omaha and Kansas City. Mrs. Forrester sat on a stool by the fire, eating toast and making humorous comments upon the subjects of those solemn paragraphs; the engagement of Miss Erma Salton-Smith, etc.

"At last, thank God! You remember her, Niel. She's been here. I think you danced with her."

"I don't think I do. What is she like?"

"She's exactly like her name. Don't you remember? Tall, very animated, glittering eyes, like the Ancient Mariner's?"

Niel laughed. "Don't you like bright eyes, Mrs. Forrester?"

"Not any others, I don't!" She joined in his laugh so gayly that the Captain looked out over his paper with an expression of satisfaction. He let the journal slowly crumple on his knees, and sat watching the two beside the grate. To him they seemed about the same age. It was a habit with him to think of Mrs. Forrester as very, very young.

She noticed that he was not reading. "Would you like me to light the lamp, Mr. Forrester?"

"No, thank you. The twilight is very pleasant."

It was twilight by now. They heard Mary come downstairs and begin stirring about the kitchen. The captain, his slippers in the zone of firelight and his heavy shoulders in shadow, snored from time to time. As the room grew dusky, the windows were squares of clear, pale violet, and the shutters ceased to rattle. The wind was dying with the day. Everything was still, except when Bohemian Mary roughly clattered a pan. Mrs. Forrester whispered that she was out of sorts because her sweetheart, Joe Pucelik, hadn't been over to see her. Sunday night was his regular night, and Sunday was the first day of the blizzard. "When

she's neglected, her tooth always begins to ache!"

"Well, now that I've got over, he'll have to come, or she will be in a temper."

"Oh, he'll come!" Mrs. Forrester shrugged. "I am blind and deaf, but I'm quite sure she makes it worth his while!" After a few moments she rose. "Come!" she whispered. "Mr. Forrester is asleep. Let's run down the hill, there's no one to stop us. I'll slip on my rubber boots. No objections!" She put her fingers on his lips. "Not a word! I can't stand this house a moment longer."

They slipped quietly out of the front door into the cold air which tasted of new-fallen snow. A clear arc of blue and rose color painted the west, over the buried town. When they reached the rounded breast of the hill, blown almost bare, Mrs. Forrester stood still and drew in deep breaths, looking down over the drifted meadows and the stiff, blue poplars.

"Oh, but it is bleak!" she murmured. "Suppose we should have to stay here all next winter, too, and the next! What will become of me, Niel?" There was fear, unmistakable fright in her voice. "You see there is nothing for me to do. I get no exercise. I don't skate; we didn't in California, and my ankles are weak. I've always danced in the winter, there's plenty of dancing at Colorado Springs. You wouldn't believe how I miss it. I shall dance till I'm eighty. I'll be the waltzing grandmother! It's good for me; I need it."

They plunged down into the drifts and did not stop again until they reached the wooden bridge.

"See, even the creek is frozen! I thought running water never froze. How long will it be like this?"

"Not long now. In a month you'll see the green begin in the marsh and run over the meadows. It's lovely over here in the spring. And you'll be able

to get out to-morrow, Mrs. Forrester. The clouds are thinning. Look, there's the new moon!"

She turned. "Oh, I saw it over the wrong shoulder!"

"No, you didn't. You saw it over mine."

She sighed and took his arm. "My dear boy, your shoulders aren't broad enough."

Instantly before his eyes rose the image of a pair of shoulders that were very broad, objectionably broad, clad in a frogged overcoat with an astrakhan collar. The intrusion of this third person annoyed him as they went slowly back up the hill.

Curiously enough, it was as Captain Forrester's wife that she most interested Niel, and it was in her relation to her husband that he most admired her. Given her other charming attributes, her comprehension of a man like the railroad builder, her loyalty to him, stamped her more than anything else. That, he felt, was quality; something that could never become worn or shabby; steel of Damascus. His admiration of Mrs. Forrester went back to that, just as, he felt, she herself went back to it. He rather liked the stories, even the spiteful ones, about the gay life she led in Colorado, and the young men she kept dangling about her every winter. He sometimes thought of the life she might have been living ever since he had known her—and the one she had chosen to live. From that disparity, he believed, came the subtlest thrill of her fascination. She mocked outrageously at the proprieties she observed, and inherited the magic of contradictions.

CHAPTER VII.

On the evenings when there was no whist at the Forresters', Niel usually sat in his room and read—but not law, as he was supposed to do. The winter

before, when the Forresters were away, and one dull day dragged after another, he had come upon a copious diversion, an almost inexhaustible resource. The high, narrow bookcase in the back office, between the double doors and the wall, was filled from top to bottom with rows of solemn-looking volumes bound in dark cloth, which were kept apart from the law library; an almost complete set of the Bohn classics, which Judge Pommeroy had bought long ago when he was a student at the University of Virginia. He had brought them West with him, not because he read them a great deal, but because, in his day, a gentleman had such books in his library, just as he had claret in his cellar. Among them was a set of Byron in three volumes, and last winter, apropos of a quotation which Niel didn't recognize, his uncle advised him to read Byron—all except "Don Juan." That, the judge remarked, with a deep smile, he "could save until later." Niel, of course, began with "Don Juan." Then he read "Tom Jones" and "Wilhelm Meister" and raced on until he came to Montaigne and a complete translation of Ovid. He hadn't finished yet with these last—always went back to them after other experiments. These authors seemed to him to know their business. Even in "Don Juan" there was a little "fooling," but with these gentlemen none.

There were philosophical works in the collection, but he did no more than open and glance at them. He had no curiosity about what men had thought; but about what they had felt and lived, he had a great deal. If any one had told him that these were classics and represented the wisdom of the ages, he would doubtless have let them alone. But ever since he had first found them for himself, he had been living a double life, with all its guilty enjoyments. He

read the *Heroides* over and over, and felt that they were the most glowing love stories ever told. He did not think of these books as something invented to beguile the idle hour, but as living creatures, caught in the very behavior of living—surprised behind their misleading severity of form and phrase. He was eavesdropping upon the past, being let into the great world that had plunged and glittered and sumptuously sinned long before little Western towns were dreamed of. Those rapt evenings beside the lamp gave him a long perspective, influenced his conception of the people about him, made him know just what he wished his own relations with these people to be. For some reason, his reading made him wish to become an architect. If the judge had left his Bohn library behind him in Kentucky, his nephew's life might have turned out differently.

Spring came at last, and the Forrester place had never been so lovely. The captain spent long, happy days among his flowering shrubs, and his wife used to say to visitors, "Yes, you can see Mr. Forrester in a moment; I will send the English gardener to call him."

Early in June, when the captain's roses were just coming on, his pleasant labors were interrupted. One morning an alarming telegram reached him. He cut it open with his garden shears, came into the house, and asked his wife to telephone for Judge Pommeroy. A savings bank, one in which he was largely interested, had failed in Denver. That evening the captain and his lawyer went west on the express. The judge, when he was giving Niel final instructions about the office business, told him he was afraid the captain was bound to lose a good deal of money.

Mrs. Forrester seemed unaware of any danger; she went to the station to

see her husband off, spoke of his errand merely as a "business trip." Niel, however, felt a foreboding gloom. He dreaded poverty for her. She was one of the people who ought always to have money; any retrenchment of their generous way of living would be a hardship for her—would be unfitting. She would not be herself in straitened circumstances.

Niel took his meals at the town hotel; on the third day after Captain Forrester's departure, he was annoyed to find Frank Ellinger's name on the hotel register. Ellinger did not appear at supper, which meant, of course, that he was dining with Mrs. Forrester, and that the lady herself would get his dinner. She had taken the occasion of the captain's absence to let Bohemian Mary go to visit her mother on the farm for a week. Niel thought it very bad taste in Ellinger to come to Sweet Water when Captain Forrester was away. He must know that it would stir up the gossips.

Niel had meant to call on Mrs. Forrester that evening, but now he went back to the office instead. He read late, and, after he went to bed, he slept lightly. He was awakened before dawn by the puffing of the switch engine down at the round house. He tried to muffle his ears in the sheet and go to sleep again, but the sound of escaping steam for some reason excited him. He could not shut out the feeling that it was summer, and that the dawn would soon be flaming gloriously over the Forresters' marsh. He had awakened with that intense, blissful realization of summer which sometimes comes to children in their beds. He rose and dressed quickly. He would get over to the hill before Frank Ellinger could intrude his unwelcome presence, while he was still asleep in the best bedroom of the Wimbleton hotel.

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ianship drew Niel up the poplar-bordered road in the early light, though he did not go near the house itself, but at the second bridge cut round through the meadow and on to the marsh. The sky was burning with the soft pink and silver of a cloudless summer dawn. The heavy, bowed grasses splashed him to the knees. All over the marsh, snow-on-the-mountain, globed with dew, made cool sheets of silver, and the swamp milkweed spread its flat, raspberry-colored clusters. There was an almost religious purity about the fresh morning air, the tender sky, the grass and flowers with the sheen of early dew upon them. There was in all living things something limpid and joyous—like the wet, morning call of the birds, flying up through the unstained atmosphere. Out of the saffron east a thin, yellow, winelike sunshine began to gild the fragrant meadows and the glistening tops of the grove. Niel wondered why he did not often come over like this, to see the day before men and their activities had spoiled it, while the morning was still unsullied, like a gift handed down from the heroic ages.

Under the bluffs that overhung the marsh he came upon thickets of wild roses, with flaming buds, just beginning to open. Where they had opened, their petals were stained with that burning rose color which is always gone by noon—a dye made of sunlight and morning and moisture, so intense that it cannot possibly last—must fade, like ecstasy. Niel took out his knife and began to cut the stiff stems, crowded with red thorns.

He would make a bouquet for a lovely lady; a bouquet gathered off the cheeks of morning—these roses, only half awake, in the defenselessness of utter beauty. He would leave them just outside one of the French windows of her bedroom. When she opened her shutters to let in the light, she would

find them—and they would perhaps give her a sudden distaste for coarse worldlings like Frank Ellinger.

After tying his flowers with a twist of meadow grass, he went up the hill through the grove and softly round the still house to the north side of Mrs. Forrester's own room, where the door-like green shutters were closed. As he bent to place the flowers on the sill, he heard from within a woman's soft laughter—impatient, indulgent, teasing, eager. Then another laugh, very different, a man's. And it was fat and lazy—ended in something like a yawn.

Niel found himself at the foot of the hill on the wooden bridge, his face hot, his temples beating, his eyes blind with anger. In his hand he still carried the prickly bunch of wild roses. He threw them over the wire fence into a mud hole the cattle had trampled under the bank of the creek. He did not know whether he had left the house by the driveway or had come down through the shrubbery. In that instant between stooping to the window sill and rising, he had lost one of the most beautiful things in his life. Before the dew dried, the morning had been wrecked for him; and all subsequent mornings, he told himself bitterly. This day saw the end of that admiration and loyalty that had been like a bloom on his existence. He could never recapture it. It was gone, like the morning freshness of the flowers.

"Lilies that fester," he muttered, "*lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds.*"

Grace, variety, the lovely voice, the sparkle of fun and fancy in those dark eyes; all this was nothing. It was not a moral scruple she had outraged, but an æsthetic ideal. Beautiful women, whose beauty meant more than it said—was their brilliancy always fed by something coarse and concealed? Was that their secret?

CHAPTER VIII.

Niel met his uncle and Captain Forrester when they alighted from the morning train, and drove over to the house with them. The business on which they had gone to Denver was not referred to until they were sitting with Mrs. Forrester in the front parlor. The windows were open, and the perfume of the mock oranges and of June roses was blowing in from the garden. Captain Forrester introduced the subject, after slowly unfolding his handkerchief and wiping his forehead, and his fleshy neck, around his low collar.

"Maidy," he said, not looking at her, "I've come home a poor man. It took about everything there was to square up. You'll have this place, unencumbered, and my pension; that will be about all. The live stock will bring in something."

Niel saw that Mrs. Forrester grew very pale, but she smiled and brought her husband his cigar stand.

"Oh, well! I expect we can manage, can't we?"

"We can just manage. Not much more. I'm afraid Judge Pommeroy considers I acted foolishly."

"Not at all, Mrs. Forrester," the judge exclaimed. "He acted just as I hope I would have done in his place. But I am an unmarried man. There were certain securities, government bonds, which Captain Forrester could have turned over to you, but it would have been at the expense of the depositors."

"I've known men to do that," said the captain heavily, "but I never considered they paid their wives a compliment. If Mrs. Forrester is satisfied, I shall never regret my decision." For the first time his tired, swollen eyes sought his wife's.

"I never question your decisions in business, Mr. Forrester. I know nothing about such things."

The captain put down the cigar he had taken but not lighted, rose with an effort, and walked over to the bay window, where he stood gazing out over his meadows.

"The place looks very nice, Maidy," he said presently. "I see you've watered the roses. They need it, this weather. Now, if you'll excuse me, I'll lie down for a while. I did not sleep well on the train. Niel and the judge will stay for lunch." He opened the door into Mrs. Forrester's room and closed it behind him.

Judge Pommeroy began to explain to Mrs. Forrester the situation they had faced in Denver. The bank, about which Mrs. Forrester knew nothing but its name, was one which paid good interest on small deposits. The depositors were wage earners; railroad employees, mechanics, and day laborers, many of whom had at some time worked for Captain Forrester. His was the only well-known name among the bank officers; it was the name which promised security and fair treatment to his old workmen and their friends. The other directors were promising young business men with many irons in the fire. But, the judge said with evident chagrin, they had refused to come up to the scratch and pay their losses like gentlemen. They claimed that the bank was insolvent, not through unwise investments or mismanagement, but because of a nationwide financial panic, a shrinking in values that no one could have foreseen. They argued that the fair thing was to share the loss with the depositors; to pay them fifty cents on the dollar, giving long-time notes for twenty-five per cent, settling on a basis of seventy-five per cent.

Captain Forrester had stood firm that not one of the depositors should lose a dollar. The promising young business men had listened to him respectfully, but finally told him they would

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settle only on their own terms; any additional refunding must be his affair. He sent to the vault for his private steel box, opened it in their presence, and sorted the contents on the table. The government bonds he turned in at once. Judge Pommeroy was sent out to sell the mining stocks and other securities in the open market.

At this part of his narrative the judge rose and began to pace the floor, twisting the seals on his watch chain.

"That was what a man of honor was bound to do, Mrs. Forrester. With five of the directors backing down, he had either to lose his name or save it. The depositors had put their savings into that bank because Captain Forrester was president. To those men with no capital but their back and their two hands, his name meant safety. As he tried to explain to the directors, those deposits were above price; money saved to buy a home, or to take care of a man in sickness, or to send a boy to school. And those young men, bright fellows, well thought of in the community, sat there and looked down their noses and let your husband strip himself down to pledging his life insurance! There was a crowd in the street outside the bank all day, every day; Poles and Swedes and Mexicans, looking scared to death. A lot of them couldn't speak English—seemed like the only English word they knew was 'Forrester.' As we went in and out we'd hear the Mexicans saying, 'Forrester, Forrester.' It was a torment for me, on your account, ma'am, to see the captain strip himself. But, 'pon my honor, I couldn't forbid him. As for those white-livered rascals that sat there——" The judge stopped before Mrs. Forrester and ruffled his bushy white hair with both hands, "By God, madam, I think I've lived too long! In my day the difference between a business man and a scoundrel was bigger than the difference between a white man and

a nigger. I wasn't the right one to go out there as the captain's counsel. One of these smooth members of the bar, like Ivy Peters is getting ready to be, might have saved something for you out of the wreck. But I couldn't use my influence with your husband. To that crowd outside the bank doors his name meant a hundred cents on the dollar, and by Heaven, they got it! I'm proud of him, ma'am; proud of his acquaintance!"

It was the first time Niel had ever seen Mrs. Forrester flush. A quick pink swept over her face. Her eyes glistened with moisture.

"You were quite right, judge. I wouldn't for the world have had him do otherwise for me. He would never hold up his head again. You see, I know him." As she said this she looked at Niel, on the other side of the room, and her glance was like a delicate and very dignified rebuke to some discourtesy—though he was not conscious of having shown her any.

When their hostess went out to see about lunch, Judge Pommeroy turned to his nephew.

"Son, I'm glad you want to be an architect. I can't see any honorable career for a lawyer, in this new business world that's coming up. Leave the law to boys like Ivy Peters, and get into some clean profession. I wasn't the right man to go with Forrester." He shook his head sadly.

"Will they really be poor?"

"They'll be pinched. It's as he said; they've nothing left but this place."

Mrs. Forrester returned and went to waken her husband for lunch. When she opened the door into her room, they heard stertorous breathing, and she called to them to come quickly. The captain was stretched upon his iron bed in the antechamber, and Mrs. Forrester was struggling to lift his head.

"Quick, Niel," she panted. "We

must get pillows under him. Bring those from my bed."

Niel gently pushed her away. Sweat poured from his face as he got his strength under the captain's shoulders. It was like lifting a wounded elephant. Judge Pommeroy hurried back to the sitting room and telephoned Dr. Denison that Captain Forrester had had a stroke.

A stroke could not finish a man like Daniel Forrester. He was kept in his bed for three weeks, and Niel helped Mrs. Forrester and Ben Keezer take care of him. Although he was at the house so much during that time, he never saw Mrs. Forrester alone—scarcely saw her at all, indeed. With so much to attend to, she became abstracted, almost impersonal. There were many letters to answer, gifts of fruit and wine and flowers to be acknowledged. Solicitous inquiries came from friends scattered all the way from the Missouri to the mountains. When Mrs. Forrester was not in the captain's room, or in the kitchen preparing special foods for him, she was at her desk.

One morning while she was seated there, a distinguished visitor arrived. Niel, waiting by the door for the letters he was to take to the post, saw a large, red-whiskered man in a rumpled pongee suit and a panama hat come climbing up the hill; Cyrus Dalzell, president of the Colorado & Utah, who had come over in his private car to inquire for the health of his old friend. Niel warned Mrs. Forrester, and she went to meet the visitor, just as he mounted the steps, wiping his face with a red silk bandanna.

He took the lady's hands and exclaimed in a warm, deep voice: "Here she is, looking as fresh as a bride! May I claim an old privilege?" He bent his head and kissed her. "I won't be in your way, Marian," he said as they came into the house, "but I had

to see for myself how he does, and how you do."

Mr. Dalzell shook hands with Niel, and as he talked he moved about the parlor clumsily and softly, like a brown bear. Mrs. Forrester stopped him to straighten his flowing yellow tie and pull down the back of his wrinkled coat.

"It's easy to see that Kitty wasn't with you this morning when you dressed," she laughed.

"Thank you, thank you, my dear. I've got a green porter down there, and he doesn't seem to realize the extent of his duties. No, Kitty wanted to come, but we have two giddy nieces out from Portsmouth, visiting us, and she felt she couldn't. I just had my car hitched onto the tail of the Burlington flyer and came myself. Now tell me about Daniel. Was it a stroke?"

Mrs. Forrester sat down on the sofa beside him and told him about her husband's illness, while he interrupted with sympathetic questions and comments, taking her hand between his large, soft palms and patting it affectionately.

"And now I can go home and tell Kitty that he will soon be as good as ever—and that you look like you were going to lead the ball to-night. You whisper to Daniel that I've got a couple cases of port down in my car that will build him up faster than anything the doctors give him. And I've brought along a dozen sherry, for a lady that knows a thing or two about wines. And next winter you are both coming out to stay with us at the Springs, for a change of air."

Mrs. Forrester shook her head gently.

"Oh, that, I'm afraid, is a pretty dream. But we'll dream it, anyway!" Everything about her had brightened since Cyrus Dalzell came up the hill. Even the long garnet earrings beside her cheeks seemed to flash with a deeper color, Niel thought. She was a differ-

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ent woman from the one who sat there writing, half an hour ago. Her fingers, as they played on the sleeve of the pongee coat, were light and fluttery as butterfly wings.

"No dream at all, my dear. Kitty has arranged everything. You know how quickly she thinks things out. I am to come for you in my car. We'll get my old porter Jim as a valet for Daniel, and you can just play around and put fresh life into us all. We saw last winter that we couldn't do anything without our Lady Forrester. Nothing came off right without her. If we had a party, we sat down afterward and wondered what in hell we'd had it for. Oh, no, we can't manage without you!"

Tears flashed into her eyes. "That's very dear of you. It's sweet to be remembered when one is away." In her voice there was the heart-breaking sweetness one sometimes hears in lovely, gentle old songs.

CHAPTER IX.

After three weeks the captain was up and around again. He dragged his left foot, and his left arm was uncertain. Though he recovered his speech, it was thick and clouded; some words he could not pronounce distinctly—slid over them, dropped out a syllable. Therefore he avoided talking even more than was his habit. The doctor said that unless another brain lesion occurred, he might get on comfortably for some years yet.

In August Niel was to go to Boston to begin coaching for his entrance examinations at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he meant to study architecture. He put off bidding the Forresters good-by until the very day before he left. His last call was different from any he had ever made there before. Already they began to treat him like a young man. He

sat rather stiffly in that parlor where he had been so much at home. The captain was in his big chair in the bay window, in the full glow of the afternoon sun, saying little, but very friendly. Mrs. Forrester, on the sofa in the shadowy corner of the room, talked about Niel's plans and his journey.

"Is it true that Mary is going to marry Pucelik this fall?" he asked her. "Who will you get to help you?"

"No one, for the present. Ben will do all I can't do. Never mind us. We will pass a quiet winter, like an old country couple—as we are!" she said lightly.

Niel knew that she faced the winter with terror, but he had never seen her more in command of herself—or more the mistress of her own house than now, when she was preparing to become the servant of it. He had the feeling, which he never used to have, that her lightness cost her something.

"Don't forget us, but don't mope. Make lots of new friends. You'll never be twenty again. Take a chorus girl out to supper—a pretty one, mind! Don't bother about your allowance. If you got into a scrape, we could manage a little check to help you out, couldn't we, Mr. Forrester?"

The captain puffed and looked amused. "I think we could, Niel, I think so. Don't get up, my boy. You must stay to dinner."

Niel said he couldn't. He hadn't finished packing, and he was leaving on the morning train.

"Then we must have a little something before you go." Captain Forrester rose heavily, with the aid of his cane, and went into the dining room. He brought back the decanter and filled three glasses with ceremony. Lifting his glass, he paused, as always, and blinked.

"Happy days!"

"Happy days!" echoed Mrs. Forrester, with her loveliest smile. "And every success to Niel!"

Both the captain and his wife came to the door with him, and stood there on the porch together, where he had so often seen them stand to speed the parting guest. He went down the hill touched and happy. As he passed over the bridge his spirits suddenly fell. Would that chilling doubt always lie in wait for him, down there in the mud, where he had thrown his roses one morning?

He burned to ask her one question, to get the truth out of her and set his mind at rest: What did she do with all her exquisiteness when she was with a man like Ellinger? Where did she put it away? And having put it away, how could she recover herself, and give one—give even him—the sense of tempered steel, a blade that could fence with any one and never break?

CHAPTER X.

It was two years before Niel Herbert came home again, and when he came the first acquaintance he met was Ivy Peters. Ivy got on the train at one of the little stations east of Sweet Water, where he had been trying a case. As he strolled through the Pullman he noticed among the passengers a young man in a gray-flannel suit, with a silk shirt of one shade of blue and a necktie of another. After regarding this urban figure from the rear for a few seconds, Ivy glanced down at his own clothes with gloating satisfaction. It was a hot day in June, but he wore the black felt hat and ready-made coat of winter weight he had always affected as a boy. He stepped forward, his hands thrust in his pockets.

"Hullo, Niel! Thought I couldn't be mistaken."

Niel looked up and saw the red, beestung face, with its two permanent

dimples, smiling down at him in contemptuous jocularity.

"Hello, Ivy. I couldn't be mistaken in you, either."

"Coming home to go into business?"

Niel replied that he was coming only for the summer vacation.

"Oh, you're not through school yet? I suppose it takes longer to make an architect than it does to make a shyster. Just as well; there's not much building going on in Sweet Water these days. You'll find a good many changes."

"Won't you sit down?" Niel indicated the neighboring chair. "You are practicing law?"

"Yes, along with a few other things. Have to keep more than one iron in the fire to make a living with us. I farm a little on the side. I rent that meadow land on the Forrester place. I've drained the old marsh and put it into wheat. My brother John does the work, and I boss the job. It's quite profitable. I pay them a good rent, and they need it. I doubt if they could get along without. Their influential friends don't seem to help them out much. Remember all those chesty old boys the captain used to drive about in his democrat wagon, and ship in barrels of Bourbon for? Good deal of bluff about all those old-timers. The panic put them out of the game. The Forresters have come down in the world like the rest. You remember how the old man used to put it over us kids and not let us carry a gun in there? I'm just mean enough to like to shoot along that creek a little better than anywhere else, now. There wasn't any harm in the old captain, but he had the delusion of grandeur. He's happier now that he's like the rest of us and don't have to change his shirt every day." Ivy's unblinking greenish eyes rested upon Niel's haberdashery.

Niel, however, did not notice this.

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He knew that Ivy wanted him to show disappointment, and he was determined not to do so. He inquired about the captain's health, pointedly keeping Mrs. Forrester's name out of the conversation.

"He's only about half there—seems contented enough. She takes good care of him, I'll say that for her. She seeks consolation; always did, you know—too much French brandy—but she never neglects him. I don't blame her. Real work comes hard on her."

Niel heard these remarks dully, through the buzz of an idea. He felt that Ivy had drained the marsh quite as much to spite him and Mrs. Forrester as to reclaim the land. Moreover, he seemed to know that until this moment Ivy himself had not realized how much that consideration weighed with him. He and Ivy had disliked each other from childhood, blindly, instinctively, recognizing each other through antipathy, as hostile insects do. By draining the marsh Ivy had obliterated a few acres of something he hated, though he could not name it, and had asserted his power over the people who had loved those unproductive meadows for their idleness and silvery beauty.

After Ivy had gone on into the smoker, Niel sat looking out at the windings of the Sweet Water and playing with his idea. The Old West had been settled by dreamers, great-hearted adventurers who were impractical to the point of magnificence; a courteous brotherhood, strong in attack but weak in defense, who could conquer but could not hold. Now all the vast territory they had won was to be at the mercy of men like Ivy Peters, who had never dared anything, never risked anything. They would drink up the mirage, dispel the morning freshness, root out the great brooding spirit of freedom, the generous, easy life of the great land-holders. The space, the color, the

princely carelessness of the pioneer they would destroy and cut up into profitable bits, as the match factory splinters the primeval forest. All the way from the Missouri to the mountains this generation of shrewd young men, trained to petty economies by hard times, would do exactly what Ivy Peters had done when he drained the Forrester marsh.

CHAPTER XI.

The next afternoon Niel found Captain Forrester in the bushy little plot he called his rose garden, seated in a stout hickory chair that could be left out in all weather, his two canes beside him. His attention was fixed upon a red block of Colorado sandstone, set on a granite boulder in the middle of the gravel space around which the roses grew. He showed Niel that this was a sundial, and explained it with great pride. Last summer, he said, he sat out here a great deal, with a square board mounted on a post, and marked the length of the shadows by his watch. His friend, Cyrus Dalzell, on one of his visits, took this board away, had the diagram exactly copied on sandstone, and sent it to him, with the columnlike boulder that formed its base.

"I think it's likely Mr. Dalzell hunted around among the mountains a good many mornings before he found a natural formation like that," said the captain. "A pillar, such as they had in Bible times. It's from the Garden of the Gods. Mr. Dalzell has his summer home up there."

The captain sat with the soles of his boots together, his legs bowed out. Everything about him seemed to have grown heavier and weaker. His face was fatter and smoother; as if the features were running into each other, as when a wax face melts in the heat. An old panama hat, burned yellow by the sun, shaded his eyes. His brown hands lay on his knees, the fingers

well apart, nerveless. His mustache was the same straw color; Niel remarked to him that it had grown no grayer. The captain touched his cheek with his palm.

"Mrs. Forrester shaved me for awhile. She did it very nicely, but I didn't like to have her do it. Now I use one of these safety razors. I can manage, if I take my time. The barber comes over once a week. Mrs. Forrester is expecting you, Niel. She's down in the grove. She goes down there to rest in the hammock."

Niel went round the house to the gate that gave into the grove. From the top of the hill he could see the hammocks slung between two cottonwoods, in the low glade at the farther end, where he had fallen the time he broke his arm. The slender white figure was still, and as he hurried across the grass he saw that a white garden hat lay over her face. He approached quietly and was just wondering if she were asleep, when he heard a soft, delighted laugh, and with a quick movement she threw off the lace hat through which she had been watching him. He stepped forward and caught her suspended figure, hammock and all, in his arms. How light and alive she was! like a bird caught in a net. If only he could rescue her and carry her off like this—off the earth of sad, inevitable periods, away from age, weariness, adverse fortune!

She showed no impatience to be released, but lay laughing up at him with that gleam of something elegantly wild, something fantastic and tantalizing—seemingly so artless, really the most finished artifice! She put her hand under his chin as if he were still a boy.

"And how handsome he's grown! Isn't the old judge proud of you! He called me up last night and began sputtering, 'It's only fair to warn you, ma'am, that I've a very handsome boy

over here.' As if I hadn't known you would be! And now you're a man, and have seen the world! Well, what have you found in it?"

"Nothing so nice as you, Mrs. Forrester."

"Nonsense! You have sweethearts?"

"Perhaps."

"Are they pretty?"

"Why they? Isn't one enough?"

"One is too many. I want you to have half a dozen—and still save the best for us! One would take everything. If you had her, you would not have come home at all. I wonder if you know how we've looked for you?" She took his hand and turned a seal ring about on his little finger absently. "Every night for weeks, when the lights of the train came swinging in down below the meadows, I've said to myself, 'Niel is coming home; there's that to look forward to.'" She caught herself as she always did when she found that she was telling too much, and finished in a playful tone. "So, you see, you mean a great deal to all of us. Did you find Mr. Forrester?"

"Oh, yes! I had to stop and look at his sundial."

She raised herself on her elbow and lowered her voice.

"Niel, can you understand it? He isn't childish, as some people say, but he will sit and watch that thing hour after hour. How can anybody like to see time visibly devoured? We are all used to seeing clocks go round, but why does he want to see that shadow creep on that stone? Has he changed much? No? I'm glad you feel so. Now tell me about the Adamses and what George is like."

Niel dropped on the turf and sat with his back against a tree trunk, answering her rapid questions and watching her while he talked. Of course, she was older. In the brilliant sun of the afternoon one saw that her skin was no longer like white lilacs—it had

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the ivory tint of gardenias that have just begun to fade. The coil of blue-black hair seemed more than ever too heavy for her head. There were lines—something strained about the corners of her mouth that used not to be there. But the astonishing thing was how these changes could vanish in a moment, be utterly wiped out in a flash of personality, and one forgot everything about her except herself.

"And tell me, Niel, do women really smoke after dinner now with the men—nice women? I shouldn't like it. It's all very well for actresses, but women can't be attractive if they do everything that men do."

"I think just now it's the fashion for women to make themselves comfortable, before anything else."

Mrs. Forrester glanced at him as if he had said something shocking.

"Ah, that's just it! The two things don't go together. Athletics and going to college and smoking after dinner—Do you like it? Don't men like women to be different from themselves? They used to."

Niel laughed. Yes, that was certainly the idea of Mrs. Forrester's generation.

"Uncle Judge says you don't come to see him any more as you used to, Mrs. Forrester. He misses it."

"My dear boy, I haven't been over to the town for six weeks. I'm always too tired. We have no horse now, and when I do go I have to walk. That house! Nothing is ever done there unless I do it, and nothing ever moves unless I move it. That's why I come down here in the afternoon—to get where I can't see the house. I can't keep it up as it should be kept, I'm not strong enough. Oh, yes, Ben helps me; he sweeps and beats the rugs and washes windows, but that doesn't get a house very far." Mrs. Forrester sat up suddenly and pinned on her white hat. "We went all the way to Chicago,

Niel, to buy that walnut furniture; couldn't find anything at home big and heavy enough. If I'd known that one day I'd have to push it about, I would have been more easily satisfied!" She rose and shook out her rumpled skirts.

They started toward the house, going slowly up the long, grassy undulation between the trees.

"Don't you miss the marsh?" Niel asked suddenly.

She glanced away evasively.

"Not much. I would never have time to go there, and we need the money it pays us. And you haven't time to play any more either, Niel. You must hurry and become a successful man. Your uncle is terribly involved. He has been so careless that he's not much better off than we are. Money is a very important thing. Realize that in the beginning; face it, and don't be ridiculous in the end, like so many of us." They stopped by the gate at the top of the hill and looked back at the green alleys and the sharp shadows, at the quivering fans of light that seemed to push the trees farther apart and made Elysian fields underneath them. Mrs. Forrester put her white hand, with all its rings, on Niel's arm.

"Do you really find a kind of pleasure in coming back to us? That's very unusual, I think. At your age I wanted to be with the young and gay. It's nice for us, though." She looked at him with her rarest smile, one he had seldom seen on her face, but always remembered—a smile without archness, without gayety, full of affection and wistfully sad. And the same thing was in her voice when she spoke those quiet words—the sudden quietness of deep feeling. She turned quickly away. They went through the gate and around the house to where the captain sat watching the sunset glory on his roses. His wife touched his shoulder.

"Will you go in, now, Mr. Forrester, or shall I bring your coat?"

"I'll go in. Isn't Niel going to stay for dinner?"

"Not this time. He'll come soon, and we'll have a real dinner for him. Will you wait for Mr. Forrester, Niel? I must hurry in and start the fire."

Niel tarried behind and accompanied the captain's slow progress toward the front of the house. He leaned upon two canes, lifting his feet slowly and putting them down firmly and carefully. He looked like an old tree walking.

Once up the steps and into the parlor, he sank into his big chair and panted heavily. The first whiff of a fresh cigar seemed to restore him.

"Can I trouble you to mail some letters for me, Niel, as you go by the post office?" He produced them from the breast pocket of his summer coat.

"Let me see whether Mrs. Forrester has anything to go." Rising, the captain went into the little hall. There, by the front door, on a table under the hatrack, was a scantily draped figure, an Arab or Egyptian slave girl, holding in her hands a large flat shell from the California coast. Niel remembered noticing that figure the first time he was ever in the house, when Doctor Dennison carried him out through this hallway with his arm in splints. In the days when the Forresters had servants and were sending over to the town several times a day, the letters for the post were always left in this shell. The captain found one now, and handed it to Niel. It was addressed to Mr. Francis Bosworth Ellinger, Glenwood Springs, Colorado.

For some reason Niel felt embarrassed and tried to slip the letter quickly into his pocket. The captain, his two canes in one hand, prevented him. He took the pale blue envelope again, and held it out at arm's length, regarding it.

"Mrs. Forrester is a fine penman; have you ever noticed? Always was. If she made me a list of articles to get at the store, I never had to hide it. It was like copper plate. That's exceptional in a woman, Niel."

Niel remembered her hand well enough; he had never seen another in the least like it; long, thin, angular letters, curiously delicate and curiously bold, looped and laced with strokes fine as a hair and perfectly distinct. Her script looked as if it had been done at a high pitch of speed, the pen driven by a perfectly confident dexterity.

"Oh, yes, captain! I'm never able to take any letters for Mrs. Forrester without looking at them. No one could forget her writing."

"Yes. It's very exceptional." The captain gave him the envelope, and with his canes went slowly toward his big chair.

Niel had often wondered just how much the captain knew. Now, as he went down the hill, he felt sure that he knew everything; more than any one else; all there was to know about Marian Forrester.

CHAPTER XII.

Niel had planned to do a great deal of reading in the Forresters' grove that summer, but he did not go over so often as he had intended. The frequent appearance of Ivy Peters about the place irritated him. Ivy visited his new wheat fields on the bottom land very often; and he always took the old path, that led from what was once the marsh, up the steep bank and through the grove. He was likely to appear at any hour, his trousers stuffed into his top boots, tramping along between the rows of trees with an air of proprietorship. He shut the gate behind the house with a slam and went whistling through the yard. Often he stopped

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at the kitchen door to call out some pleasantries to Mrs. Forrester. This annoyed Niel, for at that hour of the morning, when she was doing her house work, Mrs. Forrester was not dressed to receive her inferiors. It was one thing to greet the president of the Colorado & Utah *en déshabillé*, but it was another to chatter with a coarse-grained fellow like Ivy Peters in her wrapper and slippers, her sleeves rolled up and her throat bare to his cool, impudent eyes.

Sometimes Ivy strode through the rose plot where Captain Forrester was sitting in the sun—went by without looking at him, as if there were no one there. If he spoke to the captain at all, he did so as if he were addressing some one incapable of understanding anything. "Hullo, captain, ain't afraid this sun will spoil your complexion?" or "Well, captain, you'll have to get the prayer meetings to take up this rain question. The drought's damned bad for my wheat."

One morning, as Niel was coming up through the grove, he heard laughter by the gate, and there he saw Ivy, with his gun, talking to Mrs. Forrester. She was bareheaded, her skirts blowing in the wind, her arm through the handle of a big tin bucket that rested on the fence beside her. Ivy stood with his hat on his head, but there was in his attitude that unmistakable something which shows that a man is trying to make himself agreeable to a woman. He was telling her a funny story, probably an improper one, for it brought out her naughtiest laugh, with something nervous and excited in it, as if he were going too far. At the end of his story Ivy himself broke into his farm-hand guffaw. Mrs. Forrester shook her finger at him and, catching up her pail, ran back into the house. She bent a little with its weight, but Ivy made no offer to carry it for her. He let her trip away with it as if she

were a kitchen maid, and that were her business.

Niel emerged from the grove, and stopped where the captain sat in the garden.

"Good morning, Captain Forrester. Was that Ivy Peters who just went through here? That fellow hasn't the manners of a pig!" he blurted out.

The captain pointed to Mrs. Forrester's empty chair. "Sit down, Niel, sit down." He drew his handkerchief from his pocket and began polishing his glasses. "No," he said quietly, "he ain't overly polite."

More than if he had complained bitterly, that guarded admission made one feel how much he had been hurt and offended by Ivy's rudeness. There was something very sad in his voice, and helpless. From his equals, respect had always come to him as his due; from fellows like Ivy he had been able to command it—to order them off his place, or dismiss them from his employ.

Niel sat down and smoked a cigar with him. They had a long talk about the building of the Black Hills branch of the Burlington. In Boston last winter Niel had met an old mine owner, who was living in Deadwood when the railroad first came in. When Niel asked him if he had known Daniel Forrester, the old gentleman said, "Forrester? Was he the one with the beautiful wife?"

"You must tell her," said the captain, stroking the warm surface of his sundial. "Yes, indeed. You must tell Mrs. Forrester."

One night in the first week of July, a night of glorious moonlight, Niel found himself unable to read, or to stay indoors at all. He walked aimlessly down the wide, empty street, and crossed the first creek by the foot bridge. The wide, ripe fields, the whole country, seemed like a sleeping garden. One trod the dusty roads softly, not

to disturb the deep slumber of the world.

In the Forrester lane the scent of sweet clover hung heavy. It had always grown tall and green here ever since Niel could remember; the captain would never let it be cut until the weeds were mowed in the fall. The black, plumelike shadows of the poplars fell across the lane and over Ivy Peters' wheat fields. As he walked on, Niel saw a white figure standing on the bridge over the second creek, motionless in the clear moonlight. He hurried forward. Mrs. Forrester was looking down at the water where it flowed bright over the pebbles. He came up beside her.

"The captain is asleep?"

"Oh, yes, long ago! He sleeps well, thank Heaven! After I tuck him in, I have nothing more to worry about."

While they were standing there, talking in low voices, they heard a heavy door slam on the hill. Mrs. Forrester started and looked back over her shoulder. A man emerged from the shadow of the house and came striding down the driveway. Ivy Peters stepped upon the bridge.

"Good evening," he said to Mrs. Forrester, neither calling her by name nor removing his hat. "I see you have company. I've just been up looking at the old barn, to see if the stalls are fit to put horses in there to-morrow. I'm going to start cutting wheat in the morning, and we'll have to put the horses in your stable at noon. We'd lose time taking them back to town."

"Why, certainly. The horses can go in our barn. I'm sure Mr. Forrester would have no objection." She spoke as if he had asked her permission.

"Oh!" Ivy shrugged. "The men will begin down here at six o'clock. I won't get over till about ten, and I have to meet a client at my office at three. Maybe you could give me some lunch, to save time."

His impudence made her smile.

"Very well, then; I invite you to lunch. We lunch at one."

"Thanks. It will help me out." As if he had forgotten himself, he lifted his hat, and went down the lane swinging it in his hand.

Niel stood looking after him. "Why do you allow him to speak to you like that, Mrs. Forrester? If you'll let me, I'll give him a beating and teach him how to speak to you."

"No, no, Niel! Remember, we have to get along with Ivy Peters, we simply have to!" There was a note of anxiety in her voice, and she caught his arm.

"You don't have to take anything from him, or to stand his bad manners. Anybody else would pay you as much for the land as he does."

"But he has a lease for five years, and he could make it very disagreeable for us, don't you see? Besides"—she spoke hurriedly—"there's more than that. He's invested a little money for me in Wyoming, in land. He gets splendid land from the Indians some way, for next to nothing. Don't tell your uncle; I've no doubt it's crooked. But the judge is like Mr. Forrester; his methods don't work nowadays. He will never get us out of debt, dear man! He can't get himself out. Ivy Peters is terribly smart, you know. He owns half the town already."

"Not quite," said Niel grimly. "He's got hold of a good deal of property. He'll take advantage of anybody's necessity. You know he's utterly unscrupulous, don't you? Why didn't you let Mr. Dalzell, or some of your other old friends, invest your money for you?"

"Oh, it was too little! Only a few hundred dollars I'd saved on the house-keeping. They would put it into something safe, at six per cent. I know you don't like Ivy—and he knows it! He's always at his worst before you.

He's not so bad as—as his face, for instance!" She laughed nervously. "He honestly wants to help us out of the hole we're in. Coming and going all the time, as he does, he sees everything, and I really think he hates to have me work so hard."

"Next time you have anything to invest, you let me take it to Mr. Dalzell and explain. I'll promise to do as well by you as Ivy Peters can."

Mrs. Forrester took his arm and drew him into the lane.

"But, my dear boy, you know nothing about these business schemes. You're not clever that way—it's one of the things I love you for. I don't admire people who cheat Indians. Indeed I don't!" She shook her head vehemently.

"Mrs. Forrester, rascality isn't the only thing that succeeds in business."

"It succeeds faster than anything else, though," she murmured absently. They walked as far as the end of the lane and turned back again. Mrs. Forrester's hand tightened on his arm. She began speaking abruptly.

"You see, two years, three years, more of this, and I could still go back to California—and live again. But after that— Perhaps people think I've settled down to grow old gracefully, but I've not. I feel such a power to live in me, Niel." Her slender fingers gripped his wrist. "It's grown by being held back. Last winter I was with the Dalzells at Glenwood Springs for three weeks—I owe *that* to Ivy Peters; he looked after things here, and his sister kept house for Mr. Forrester—and I was surprised at myself. I could dance all night and not feel tired. I could ride horseback all day and be ready for a dinner party in the evening. I had no clothes, of course; old evening dresses with yards and yards of satin and velvet in them, that Mrs. Dalzell's sewing woman made over. But I looked well enough! Yes, I did. I

always know how I'm looking, and I looked well enough. The men thought so. I looked happier than any woman there. They were nearly all younger—much. But they seemed dull, bored to death. After a glass or two of champagne they went to sleep and had nothing to say! I always look better after the first glass—it gives me a little color, it's the only thing that does. I accepted the Dalzells' invitation with a purpose; I wanted to see whether I had anything left worth saving. And I have, I tell you! You would hardly believe it, I could hardly believe it, but I still have!"

By this time they had reached the bridge, a bare white floor in the moonlight. Mrs. Forrester had been quickening her pace all the while.

"So that's what I'm struggling for, to get out of this hole"—she looked about as if she had fallen into a deep well—"out of *it*! When I'm alone here for months together, I plan and plot. If it weren't for that—"

As Niel walked back to his room behind the law offices, he felt frightened for her. When women began to talk about still feeling young, didn't it mean that something had broken? Two or three years, she said. He shivered. Only yesterday old Doctor Dennison had proudly told him that Captain Forrester might live a dozen. "We are keeping his general health up remarkably, and he was originally a man of iron."

What hope was there for her? He could still feel her hand upon his arm, as she urged him faster and faster up the lane.

CHAPTER XIII.

The weather was dry and intensely hot for several weeks, and then, at the end of July, thunderstorms and torrential rains broke upon the Sweet Water valley. The river burst out of its banks, all the creeks were up, and

the stubble of Ivy Peters' wheat fields lay under water. A wide lake and two rushing creeks now separated the Forresters from the town. Ben Keezer rode over to them every day to do the chores and to take them their mail. One evening Ben, with his slicker and leather mailbag, had just come out of the post office and was preparing to mount his horse, when Niel Herbert stopped him to ask in a low voice whether he had got the Denver paper.

"Oh, yes! I always wait for the papers. She likes to have them to read of an evening. Guess it's pretty lonesome over there." He swung into his saddle and splashed off. Niel walked slowly around to the hotel for dinner. He had found something very disconcerting in the Denver paper: Frank Ellinger's picture on the society page, along with Constance Ogden's. They had been married yesterday in Colorado Springs and were stopping at the Antlers.

After supper Niel put on his rubber coat and started for the Forresters'. When he reached the first creek, he found that the foot bridge had been washed out from the far bank and lay obliquely in the stream, battered at by the yellow current which might at any moment carry it away. One could not cross the ford without a horse. He looked irresolutely across the submerged bottom lands. The house was dark, no lights in the parlor windows. The rain was beginning to fall again. Perhaps she had rather be alone to-night. He would go over to-morrow.

He went back to the law office and tried to make himself comfortable, though the place was in distracting disorder. The continued rain had set one of the chimneys leaking, had brought down streams of soot and black water and flooded the stove and the judge's once handsome Brussels carpet. The tinner had been there all afternoon, trying to find what was the

matter with the flue, cutting a new sheet-iron drawer to fit under the stove pipe. But at six o'clock he had gone away, leaving tools and sheets of metal lying about. The rooms were damp and cold. Niel put on a heavy sweater, since he could not have a fire, lit the big coal-oil lamp, and sat down with a book. When at last he looked at his watch, it was nearly midnight, and he had been reading three hours. He would have another pipe, and go to bed. He had scarcely lit it, when he heard quick, hurrying footsteps in the echoing corridor outside. He got to the door in an instant, was there to open it before Mrs. Forrester had time to knock. He caught her by the arm and pulled her in.

Everything but her wet, white face was hidden by a black-rubber hat and a coat that was much too big for her. Streams of water trickled from the coat, and when she opened it he saw that she was drenched to the waist—her black dress clung in a muddy pulp about her.

"Mrs. Forrester," he cried, "you can't have crossed the creek! It's up to a horse's belly in the ford."

"I came over the bridge—what's left of it. It shook under me, but I'm not heavy." She drew off her hat and wiped the water from her face with her hands.

"Why didn't you ask Ben to bring you over on his horse? Here, please swallow this."

She pushed his hand aside. "Wait. Afterwards. Ben? I didn't think until after he was gone. It's the telephone I want, long distance. Get me Colorado Springs, the Antlers, quick!"

Then Niel noticed that she smelled strong of spirits; it steamed above the smell of rubber and creek mud and wet cloth. She snatched up the desk telephone, but he gently took it from her.

"I'll get them for you, but you're in

no condition to talk now; you're out of breath. Do you really want to talk to-night? You know Mrs. Beasley will hear every word you say." Mrs. Beasley was the Sweet Water central, and an indefatigable reporter of everything that went over the wires.

Mrs. Forrester, sitting in his uncle's desk chair, tapped the carpet with the toe of her rubber boot. "Do hurry, please," she said in that polite, warning tone of which even Ivy Peters was afraid.

Niel aroused the sleepy central and put in the call. "She asks whom you wish to speak to?"

"Frank Ellinger. Say Judge Pommeroy's office wishes to speak to him."

Niel began soothing Mrs. Beasley at the other end. "No, not the management, Mrs. Beasley, one of the guests. Frank Ellinger," he spelled the name. "Yes, Judge Pommeroy's office wants to talk to him. I'll be right here. As soon as you can, please."

He put down the instrument. "I'd rather, you know, publish anything in the town paper than telephone it through Mrs. Beasley." Mrs. Forrester paid no heed to him, did not look at him, sat staring at the wall. "I can't see why you didn't call me up and ask me to bring a horse over for you, if you felt you must get to a long-distance telephone to-night."

"Yes; I didn't think of it. I only knew I had to get over here, and I was afraid something might stop me." She was watching the telephone as if it were alive. Her eyes were shrunk to hard points. Her brows, drawn together in an acute angle, kept twitching in the frown which held them—the singular frown of one overcome by alcohol or fatigue, who is holding on to consciousness by the strength of a single purpose. Her blue lips, the black shadows under her eyes, made her look as if some poison were at work in her body.

They waited and waited. Niel understood that she did not wish him to talk. Her mind was struggling with something, with every blink of her lashes she seemed to face it anew. Presently she rose as if she could bear the suspense no longer and went over to the window, leaned against it.

"Did you leave Captain Forrester alone?" Niel asked suddenly.

"Yes. Nothing will happen over there. Nothing ever *does* happen!" she answered wildly, wringing her hands.

The telephone buzzed. Mrs. Forrester darted toward the desk, but Niel lifted the instrument in his left hand and barred her way with his right. "Try to be calm, Mrs. Forrester. When I get Ellinger I will let you talk to him—and central will hear every word you say, remember."

After some exchanges with the Colorado office, he pointed her to the chair. "Sit down and I'll give it to you. He is on the wire."

He did not dare to leave her alone, though it was awkward enough to be a listener. He walked to the window and stood with his back to the desk where she was sitting.

"Is that you, Frank? This is Marian. I won't keep you a moment. You were asleep? So early? That's not like you. You've reformed already, haven't you? That's what marriage does, they say. No, I wasn't altogether surprised. You might have taken me into your confidence, though. Haven't I deserved it?"

A long, listening pause. Niel stared stupidly at the dark window. He had steeled his nerves for wild reproaches. The voice he heard behind him was her most charming; playful, affectionate, intimate, with a thrill of pleasant excitement that warmed its slight formality and burned through the commonplace words like the color in an opal. He simply held his breath while she fluttered on:

"Where shall you go for your honeymoon? Oh, I'm very sorry! So soon! . . . You must take good care of her. Give her my love. . . . I should think California, at this time of the year, might be right . . ."

It went on like this for some minutes. The voice, it seemed to Niel, was that of a woman, young, beautiful, happy—warm and at her ease, sitting in her own drawing-room and talking on a stormy night to a dear friend far away.

"Oh, unusually well, for me. Stop and see for yourself. You will be going to Omaha on business next week, before California. Oh, yes, you will! Stop off between trains. You know how welcome you are, always."

A long pause. An exclamation from Mrs. Forrester made Niel turn sharply round. Now it was coming! Her voice was darkening with every word.

"I think I understand you. You are not speaking from your own room? What, from the office booth? Oh, then I understand you very well indeed!" Niel looked about in alarm. It was time to stop her, but how? The voice went on.

"Play safe! When have you ever played anything else? You know, Frank, the truth is that you're a coward; a great, hulking coward. Do you hear me? I want you to hear! . . . You've got a safe thing at last, I should think; safe and pasty! How much stock did you get with it? A big block, I hope! Now let me tell you the truth: I don't want you to come here! I never want to see you again while I live, and I forbid you to come and look at me when I'm dead. I don't want your hateful eyes to look at my dead face. Do you hear me? Why don't you answer me? Don't dare to hang up the receiver, you coward! Oh, you big . . . Frank, Frank, say something! Oh, he's shut me off, I can't hear him!"

She flung the receiver down, dropped her head on the desk, and broke into heavy, groaning sobs. Niel stood over her and waited with composure. For once he had been quick enough; he had saved her. The moment that quivering passion of hatred and wrong leaped into her voice, he had taken the big shears left by the tinner and cut the insulated wire behind the desk. Her reproaches had got no farther than this room.

When the sobs ceased he touched her shoulder. He shook her, but there was no response. She was asleep, sunk in a heavy stupor. Her hands and face were so cold that he thought there could not be a drop of warm blood left in her body. He carried her into his room, cut off her drenched clothing, wrapped her in his bathrobe and put her into his own bed. She was absolutely unconscious. He blew out the light, locked her in, and left the building, going as fast as he could to Judge Pommeroy's cottage. He roused his uncle and briefly explained the situation.

"Can you dress and go down to the office for the rest of the night, Uncle Judge? Some one must be with her. And I'll get over to the captain at once; he certainly oughtn't to be left alone. If she could get across the bridge, I guess I can. By the way, she began talking wild, and I cut the telephone wire behind your desk. So keep an eye on it. It might make trouble on a stormy night like this. I'll get a livery hack and take Mrs. Forrester home in the morning, before the town is awake."

When daylight began to break Niel went into Captain Forrester's room and told him that his wife had been sent for in the night to answer a long-distance telephone call, and that now he was going to bring her home.

The captain lay propped up on three big pillows. Since his face had grown fat and relaxed, its ruggedness had

changed to an almost Asiatic smoothness. He looked like a wise, old Chinese mandarin as he lay listening to the young man's fantastic story with perfect composure, merely blinking and saying, "Thank you, Niel, thank you."

As Niel went through the sleeping town on his way to the livery barn, he saw the short, plump figure of Mrs. Beasley, like a boiled pudding sewed up in a blue kimono, waddling through the feathery asparagus bed behind the telephone office. She had already been next door to tell her neighbor Molly Tucker, the seamstress, the story of her exciting night.

CHAPTER XIV.

Soon afterward, when Captain Forrester had another stroke, Mrs. Beasley and Molly Tucker and their friends were perfectly agreed that it was a judgment upon his wife. No judgment could have been crueller. Under the care of him, now that he was helpless, Mrs. Forrester quite went to pieces.

Even after their misfortunes had begun to come upon them, she had maintained her old reserve. She had asked nothing and accepted nothing. Her demeanor toward the townspeople was always the same; easy, cordial, and impersonal. Her own friends had moved away long ago—all except Judge Pommeroy and Doctor Dennison. When any of the housewives from the town came to call, she met them in the parlor, chatted with them in the smiling, careless manner they could never break through, and they got no further. They still felt they must put on their best dress and carry a card case when they went to the Forresters'.

But now that the captain was helpless, everything changed. She could hold off the curious no longer. The townswomen brought soups and custards for the invalid. When they came to sit out the night with him, she turned

the house over to them. She was worn out; so exhausted that she was dull to what went on about her. The Mrs. Beasleys and Molly Tuckers had their chance at last. They went in and out of Mrs. Forrester's kitchen as familiarly as they did out of one another's. They rummaged through the linen closet to find more sheets, pried about in the attic and cellar. They went over the house like ants, the house where they had never before got past the parlor; and they found they had been fooled all these years. There was nothing remarkable about the place at all! The kitchen was inconvenient, the sink was smelly. The carpets were worn, the curtains faded, the clumsy, old-fashioned furniture they wouldn't have had for a gift, and the upstairs bedrooms were full of dust and cobwebs.

Judge Pommeroy remarked to his nephew that he had never seen these women look so wide-awake, so important and pleased with themselves, as now when he encountered them bustling about the Forrester place. The captain's illness had the effect of a social revival, like a new club or a church society. The creatures grew bolder and bolder; and Mrs. Forrester, apparently, had no power of resistance. She drudged in the kitchen, slept, half-dressed, in one of the chambers upstairs, kept herself going on black coffee and brandy. All the bars were down. She had ceased to care about anything.

As the women came and went through the lane, Niel sometimes overheard snatches of their conversation.

"Why don't she sell some of that silver? All those platters and covered dishes stuck away with the tarnish of years on them!"

"I wouldn't mind having some of her linen. There's a chest full of double damask upstairs, every tablecloth long enough to make two. Did you ever see anything like the wine

glasses! I'll bet there's not as many in both saloons put together. If she has a sale after he's gone, I'll buy a dozen champagne glasses; they're nice to serve sherbet in."

"There are nine dozen glasses," said Molly Tucker, "counting them for beer and whisky. If there is a sale, I've a mind to bid in a couple of them green ones, with long stems, for mantel ornaments. But she'll never sell 'em all, unless she can get the saloons to take 'em."

Ed Elliott's mother laughed. "She'll never sell 'em, as long as she's got anything to put in 'em."

"The cellar will go dry, some day."

"I guess there's always plenty that will get it for such as her. I never go there now that I don't smell it on her. I went over late the other night, and she was on her knees, washing up the kitchen floor. Her eyes were glassy. She kept washing the place around the ice box over and over, till it made me nervous. I said, 'Mrs. Forrester, I think you've washed that place several times already.'"

"Was she confused?"

"Not a particle! She laughed and said she was often absent-minded."

Mrs. Elliott's companions laughed, too, and agreed that absent-minded was a good expression.

Niel repeated this conversation to his uncle. "Uncle," he declared, "I don't see how I can go back to Boston and leave the Forresters. I'd like to chuck school for a year, and see them through. I want to go over there and clear those gossips out. Could you stay at the hotel for a few weeks, and let me have Black Tom? With him to help me, I'd send every one of those women trotting down the lane."

It was arranged quietly, and at once. Tom was put in the kitchen, and Niel himself took charge of the nursing. He met the women with firmness: they

were very kind, but now nothing was needed. The doctor had said the house must be absolutely quiet and that the invalid must see no one.

Once the house was tranquil, Mrs. Forrester went to bed and slept for the better part of a week. The captain himself improved. On his good days he could be put into a wheel chair and rolled out into his garden to enjoy the September sunlight and the last of his brier roses.

"Thank you, Niel; thank you, Tom," he often said when they lifted him into his chair. "I value this quiet very highly." If a day came when they thought he ought not to go out, he was sad and disappointed.

"Better get him out, no matter what," said Mrs. Forrester. "He likes to look at his place. That, and his cigar, are the only pleasures he has left."

When she was rested and in command of herself again, she took her place in the kitchen, and Black Tom went back to the judge.

At night, when he was alone, when Mrs. Forrester had gone to bed and the captain was resting quietly, Niel found a kind of solemn happiness in his vigils. It had been hard to give up that year; most of his classmates were younger than he. It had cost him something, but now that he had taken the step, he was glad. As he put in the night hours, sitting first in one chair and then in another, reading, smoking, getting a lunch to keep himself awake, he had the satisfaction of those who keep faith. He liked being alone with the old things that had seemed so beautiful to him in his childhood. These were still the most comfortable chairs in the world, and he would never like any pictures so well as "William Tell's Chapel" and "The House of the Tragic Poet." No card table was so good for solitaire as this old one with a stone top, mosaic in the pattern of a chess-board, which one of

the captain's friends had brought him from Naples. No other house could take the place of this one in his life.

He had time to think of many things; of himself and of his old friends here. He had noticed that often when Mrs. Forrester was about her work, the captain would call to her, "Maidy, Maidy," and she would reply, "Yes, Mr. Forrester," from wherever she happened to be, but without coming to him, as if she knew that when he called to her in that tone he was not asking for anything. He wanted to know if she were near, perhaps; or, perhaps, he merely liked to call her name and to hear her answer. The longer Niel was with Captain Forrester in those peaceful, closing days of his life, the more he felt that the captain knew his wife better even than she knew herself; and that, knowing her, he—to use one of his own expressions—valued her.

CHAPTER XV.

Captain Forrester's death, which occurred early in December, was "telegraphic news," the only State news that the discouraged town of Sweet Water had furnished for a long while. Flowers and telegrams came from East and West, but it happened that none of the captain's closest friends could come to his funeral. Mr. Dalzell was in California, the president of the Burlington railroad was traveling in Europe. The others were far away or in uncertain health. Doctor Dennison and Judge Pommeroy were the only two of his intimates among the pallbearers.

On the morning of the funeral, when the captain was already in his coffin, and the undertaker was in the parlor setting up chairs, Niel heard a knocking at the kitchen door. There he found Adolph Blum, carrying a large white box.

"Niel," he said, "will you please give

these to Mrs. Forrester, and tell her they are from Rhein and me, for the captain?"

Adolph was in his old working clothes, the only clothes he had, probably, with a knitted comforter about his neck. Niel knew he wouldn't come to the funeral, so he said:

"Won't you come in and see him, 'Dolph? He looks just like himself."

Adolph hesitated, but he caught sight of the undertaker's man, through the parlor bay window, and said, "No, thank you, Niel," thrust his red hands into his jacket pockets, and walked away.

Niel took the flowers out of the box, a great armful of yellow roses, which must have cost the price of many a dead rabbit. He carried them upstairs, where Mrs. Forrester was lying down.

"These are from the Blum boys," he said. "Adolph just brought them to the kitchen door."

Mrs. Forrester looked at them, then turned away her head on the pillow, her lips trembling. It was the only time that day he saw her pale composure break.

The funeral was large. Old settlers and farmer folk came from all over the county to follow the pioneer's body to the grave. As Niel and his uncle were driving back from the cemetery with Mrs. Forrester, she spoke for the first time since they had left the house.

"Judge Pommeroy," she said quietly, "I think I will have Mr. Forrester's sundial taken over and put above his grave. I can have an inscription cut on the base. It seems more appropriate for him than any stone we could buy. And I will plant some of his own rose-bushes beside it."

When they got back to the house it was four o'clock, and she insisted upon making tea for them. "I would like it myself, and it is better to be doing something. Wait for me in the parlor.

And, Niel, move the things back as we always have them."

The gray day was darkening, and as the three sat having their tea in the bay window, swift squalls of snow were falling over the wide meadows between the hill and the town, and the creaking of the big cottonwoods about the house seemed to say that winter had come.

CHAPTER XVI.

One morning in April Niel was alone in the law office. His uncle had been ill with rheumatic fever for a long while, and he had been attending to the routine of business.

The door opened, and a figure stood there, strange and yet familiar—he had to think a moment before he realized that it was Orville Ogden, who used to come to Sweet Water so often, but who had not been seen there now for several years. He didn't look a day older; one eye was still direct and clear, the other clouded and oblique. He still wore a stiff imperial and twisted mustache, the gray color of old beeswax, and his thin hair was brushed heroically up over the bald spot.

"This is Judge Pommeroy's nephew, isn't it? I can't think of your name, my boy, but I remember you. Is the Judge out?"

"Please be seated, Mr. Ogden. My uncle is ill. He hasn't been at the office for several months. He's had really a very bad time of it. Is there anything I can do for you?"

"Oh, I'm sorry to hear that! I'm sorry." He spoke as if he were. "I guess all we fellows are getting older, whether we like it or not. It made a great difference when Daniel Forrester went." Mr. Ogden took off his overcoat, put his hat and gloves neatly on the desk, and then seemed somewhat at a loss. "What is your uncle's trouble?" he asked suddenly.

Niel told him. "I was to have gone

back to school this winter, but uncle begged me to stay and look after things for him. There was no one here he wanted to intrust his business to."

"I see, I see," said Mr. Ogden thoughtfully. "Then you do attend to his business for the present?" He paused and reflected. "Yes, there was something that I wanted to take up with him. I am stopping off for a few hours only, between trains. I might speak to you about it, and you could consult your uncle and write me in Chicago. It's a confidential matter, and concerns another person."

Niel assured him of his discretion, but Mr. Ogden seemed to find the subject difficult to approach. He looked very grave and slowly lit a cigar.

"It is simply," he said at last, "a rather delicate suggestion I wish to make to your uncle about one of his clients. I have several friends in the government at Washington just at present, friends who would go out of their way to serve me. I have been thinking that we might manage it to get a special increase of pension for Mrs. Forrester. I am due in Chicago this week, and after my business there is finished, I would be quite willing to go on to Washington to see what can be done; provided, of course, that no one, least of all your uncle's client, knows of my activity in the matter."

Niel flushed. "I'm sorry, Mr. Ogden," he brought out, "but Mrs. Forrester is no longer a client of my uncle's. After the captain's death, she saw fit to take her business away from him."

Mr. Ogden's normal eye became as blank as the other.

"What's that? He isn't her lawyer? Why, for twenty years——"

"I know that, sir. She didn't treat him with much consideration. She transferred her business very abruptly."

"To whom, may I ask?"

"To a lawyer here in town; Ivy Peters."

"Peters? I never heard of him."

"No, you wouldn't have. He wasn't one of the people who went to the Forrester house in the old days. He's one of the younger generation, a few years older than I. He rented part of the Forresters' land for several years before the captain's death—was their tenant. That was how Mrs. Forrester came to know him. She thinks him a good business man."

Mr. Ogden frowned. "And is he?"

"Some people think so."

"Is he trustworthy?"

"Far from it. He takes the cases nobody else will take. He may treat Mrs. Forrester honestly. But if he does, it will not be from principle."

"This is very distressing news. Go on with your work, my boy. I must think this over." Mr. Ogden rose and walked about the room, his hands behind him. Niel turned to an unfinished letter on his desk, in order to leave his visitor the more free.

Mr. Ogden's position, he understood, was a difficult one. He had been devoted to Mrs. Forrester, and before Constance had made up her mind to marry Frank Ellinger, before the mother and daughter began to angle for him, Mr. Ogden had come to the Forresters' more frequently than any of their Denver friends. He hadn't been back, Niel believed, since that Christmas party when he and his family were there with Ellinger. Very soon afterward he must have seen what his womenfolk were up to; and whether he approved or disapproved, he must have decided that there was nothing for him to do but to keep out. It hadn't been the Forresters' reversal of fortune that had kept him away. One could see that he was deeply troubled, that he had her heavily on his mind.

Niel had finished his letter and was

beginning another, when Mr. Ogden stopped beside his desk, where he stood twisting his imperial tighter and tighter.

"You say this young lawyer is unprincipled? Sometimes rascals have a soft spot, a sentiment, where women are concerned."

Niel stared. He immediately thought of Ivy's dimples.

"A soft spot? A sentiment? Mr. Ogden, why not go to his office? A glance would convince you."

"Oh, that's not necessary! I understand." He looked out of the window, from which he could see the treetops of the Forrester grove, and murmured, "Poor lady! So misguided. She ought to have advice from some of Daniel's friends." He took out his watch and consulted it, turning something over in his mind. His train was due in an hour, he said. Nothing could be done at present. In a few moments he left the office.

Afterward, Niel felt sure that when Mr. Ogden stood there uncertainly, watch in hand, he was considering an interview with Mrs. Forrester. He had wanted to go to her, and had given it up. Was he afraid of his womenfolk? Or was it another kind of cowardice—the fear of losing a pleasant memory, of finding her changed and marred, a dread of something that would throw a disenchanting light upon the past? Niel had heard his uncle say that Mr. Ogden admired pretty women, though he had married a homely one, and that in his deep, non-committal way he was very gallant. Perhaps, with a little encouragement, he would have gone to see Mrs. Forrester, and he might have helped her. The fact that he had done nothing to bring this about, made Niel realize how much his own feeling toward that lady had changed.

It was Mrs. Forrester herself who had changed. Since her husband's

death she seemed to have become another woman. For years Niel and his uncle, the Dalzells and all her friends, had thought of the captain as a drag upon his wife; a care that drained her and dimmed her and kept her from being all that she might be. But without him, she was like a ship without ballast, driven hither and thither by every wind. She was flighty and perverse. She seemed to have lost her faculty of discrimination; her power of easily and graciously keeping every one in his proper place.

Ivy Peters had been in Wyoming at the time of Captain Forrester's illness and death—called away by a telegram which announced that oil had been discovered near his land holdings. He returned soon after the captain's funeral, however, and was seen about the Forrester place more than ever. As there was nothing to be done on his fields in the winter, he had amused himself by pulling down the old barn after office hours. One was likely to come upon him, smoking his cigar on the front porch as if he owned the place. He often spent the evening there, playing cards with Mrs. Forrester or talking about his business projects. He had not made his fortune yet, but he was on the way to it. Occasionally he took a friend or two, some of the town boys, over to dine at Mrs. Forrester's. The boys' mothers and sweethearts were greatly scandalized. "Now she's after the young ones," said Ed Elliott's mother. "She's getting childish."

At last Niel had a plain talk with Mrs. Forrester. He told her that people were gossiping about Ivy's being there so much. He had heard comments even on the street.

"But I can't bother about their talk. They have always talked about me, always will. Mr. Peters is my lawyer and my tenant; I have to see him, and I'm certainly not going to his office.

I can't sit in the house alone every evening and knit. If you came to see me any oftener than you do, that would make talk. You are still younger than Ivy—and better looking! Did that never occur to you?"

"I wish you wouldn't talk to me like that," he said coldly. "Mrs. Forrester, why don't you go away? To California, to people of your own kind. You know this town is no place for you."

"I mean to, just as soon as I can sell this place. It's all I have, and if I leave it to tenants, it will run down, and I can't sell it to advantage. That's why Ivy is here so much; he's trying to make the place presentable; pulling down the old barn that had become an eyesore, putting new boards in the porch floor where the old ones had rotted. Next summer I am going to paint the house. Unless I keep the place up, I can never get my price for it." She talked nervously, with exaggerated earnestness, as if she were trying to persuade herself.

"And what are you asking for it now, Mrs. Forrester?"

"Twenty thousand dollars."

"You'll never get it. At least, not until times have greatly changed."

"That's what your uncle said. He wouldn't attempt to sell it for more than twelve. That's why I had to put it into other hands. Times have changed, but he doesn't realize it. Mr. Forrester himself told me it would be worth that. Ivy says he can get me twenty thousand, or if not, he will take it off my hands as soon as his investments begin to bring in returns."

"And in the meantime, you are simply wasting your life here."

"Not altogether." She looked at him with pleading plausibility. "I am getting rested after a long strain. And while I wait, I'm finding new friends among the young men—those your age,

and a little younger. I've wanted for a long while to do something for the boys in this town, but my hands were full. I hate to see them growing up like savages, when all they need is a civilized house to come to, and a woman to give them a few hints. They've never had a chance. You wouldn't be the boy you are if you'd never gone to Boston—and you've always had older friends who'd seen better days. Suppose you had grown up like Ed Elliott and Joe Simpson?"

"I flatter myself I wouldn't be exactly like them, if I had! However, there is no use discussing it, if you've thought it over and made up your mind. I spoke of it because I thought you mightn't realize how it strikes the townspeople."

"I know!" She tossed her head. Her eyes glittered, but there was no mirth in them—it was more like hysterical defiance. "I know; they call me the 'Merry Widow.' I rather like it!"

Niel left the house without further argument, and though that was three weeks ago, he had not been back since. Mrs. Forrester had called to see his uncle in the meantime. The judge was as courtly as ever in his manner toward her, but he was deeply hurt by her defection, and his cherishing care of her would never be revived. He had attended to all Captain Forrester's business for twenty years, and since the failure of the Denver bank had never deducted a penny for fees from the money intrusted to him. Mrs. Forrester had treated him very badly. She had given him no warning. One day Ivy Peters had come into the office with a written order from her, requesting that an accounting, and all funds and securities, be turned over to him. Since then she had never spoken of the matter to the judge—or to Niel, save in that conversation about the sale of the property.

CHAPTER XVII.

One morning when a warm May wind was whirling the dust up the street, Mrs. Forrester came smiling into Judge Pommeroy's office, wearing a new spring bonnet, and a short black-velvet cape, fastened at the neck with a bunch of violets. "Please be nice enough to notice my new clothes, Niel," she said coaxingly. "They are the first I've had in years and years."

He told her they were very pretty.

"And aren't you glad I have some at last?" She smiled inquiringly through her veil. "I feel as if you weren't going to be cross with me to-day, and would do what I ask you. It's nothing very troublesome. I want you to come to dinner Friday night. If you come, there will be eight of us, counting Annie Peters. They are all boys you know, and if you don't like them, you ought to! Yes, you ought to!" She nodded at him severely. "Since you mind what people say, Niel, aren't you afraid they'll be saying you're a snob, just because you've been to Boston and seen a little of the world? You mustn't be so stiff, so—so superior! It isn't becoming, at your age." She drew her brows down into a level frown so like his own that he laughed. He had almost forgotten her old talent for mimicry.

"What do you want me for? You used always to say it was no good asking people who didn't mix."

"You can mix well enough, if you take the trouble. And this time you will, for me. Won't you?"

When she was gone, Niel was angry with himself for having been persuaded.

On Friday evening he was the last guest to arrive. It was a warm night, after a hot day. The windows were open, and the perfume of the lilacs came into the dusky parlor where the boys were sitting about in chairs that

seemed too big for them. A lamp was burning in the dining room, and there Ivy Peters stood at the sideboard, mixing cocktails. His sister Annie was in the kitchen, helping the hostess. Mrs. Forrester came in for a moment to greet Niel, then excused herself and hurried back to Annie Peters. Through the open door he saw that the silver dishes had reappeared on the dinner table, and the candlesticks and flowers. The young men who sat about in the twilight would not know the difference, he thought, if she had furnished her table that morning, from the stock in Wernz's queensware store. Their conception of a really fine dinner service was one "hand painted" by a sister or sweetheart. Each boy sat with his legs crossed, one tan shoe swinging in the air and displaying a tan silk sock. They were talking about clothes; Joe Simpson, who had just inherited his father's clothing business, was eager to tell them what the summer styles would be.

Ivy Peters came in, shaking his drinks. "You fellows are like a bunch of girls—always talking about what you are going to wear and how you can spend your money. Simpson wouldn't get rich very fast if you all wore your clothes as long as I do. When did I get this suit, Joe?"

"Oh, about the year I graduated from high school, I guess!"

They all laughed at Ivy. No matter what he did or said, they laughed—in recognition of his general success.

Mrs. Forrester came back, fanning herself with a little sandalwood fan, and when she appeared the boys rose—in alarm, one might have thought, from the suddenness of it. That much, at any rate, she had succeeded in teaching them.

"Are your cocktails ready, Ivy? You will have to wait for me a moment, while I put some powder on my nose. If I'd known how hot it would be to-

night, I'm afraid I wouldn't have had a roast for you. I'm browner than the ducks. You can pour them, though. I won't be long."

She disappeared into her own room, and the boys sat down with the same surprising promptness. Ivy Peters carried the tray about, and they held their glasses before them, waiting for Mrs. Forrester. When she came, she took Niel's arm and led him into the dining room. "Did you notice," she whispered to him, "how they hold their glasses? What is it they do to a little glass to make it look so vulgar? Nobody could ever teach them to pick one up and drink out of it, not if there were tea in it!"

Aloud she said: "Niel, will you light the candles for me? And then take the head of the table, please. You can carve ducks?"

"Not so well as—as my uncle does," he murmured, carefully putting back a candle shade.

"Nor as Mr. Forrester did? I don't ask that. Nobody can carve now as men used to. But you can get them apart, I suppose? The place at your right is for Annie Peters. She is bringing in the dinner for me. Be seated, gentlemen!" with a little mocking bow and a swinging of earrings.

While Niel was carving the ducks, Annie slipped into the chair beside him, her naturally red face glowing from the heat of the stove. She was several years younger than her brother, whom she obeyed unquestioningly in everything. She had an extremely bad complexion and pale yellow hair with white lights in it, exactly the color of molasses taffy that has been pulled until it glistens. During the dinner she did not once speak, except to say, "Thank you," or "No, thank you." Nobody but Mrs. Forrester talked much until the first helping of duck was consumed. The boys had not yet learned to do two things at once. They paused only

to ask their hostess if she "would care for the jelly," or to answer her questions.

Niel studied Mrs. Forrester between the candles, as she nodded encouragingly to one and another, trying to "draw them out," laughing at Roy Jones' heavy jokes, or congratulating Joe Simpson upon his new dignity as a business man with a business of his own. The long earrings swung beside the thin cheeks that were none the better, he thought, for the rouge she had put on them when she went to her room just before dinner. It improved some women, but not her—at least, not to-night, when her eyes were hollow with fatigue, and she looked pinched and worn as he had never seen her. He sighed as he thought how much work it meant to cook a dinner like this for eight people—and a beefsteak with potatoes would have pleased them better! They didn't really like this kind of food at all. Why did she do it? How would she feel about it to-night, when she sank dead weary into bed, after these stupid boys had said good night, and their yellow shoes had carried them down the hill?

She was not eating anything; she was using up all her vitality to electrify these heavy lads into speech. Niel felt that he must help her, or at least try to. He addressed them one after another with energy and determination; he tried baseball, politics, scandal, the corn crop. They answered him with monosyllables or exclamations. He soon realized that they didn't want his polite remarks; they wanted more duck, and to be let alone with it.

Dinner was soon over, at any rate. The hostess' attempts to prolong it were unavailing. The salad and frozen pudding were dispatched as promptly as the roast had been. The guests went into the parlor and lit cigars.

Mrs. Forrester had the old-fashioned notion that men should be alone after

dinner. She did not join them for half an hour. Perhaps she had lain down upstairs, for she looked a little rested. The boys were talking now, discussing a camping trip Ed Elliott was going to take in the mountains. They were giving him advice about camp outfits, trout flies, various mixtures to keep off mosquitoes.

"I'll tell you, boys," said Mrs. Forrester, when she had listened to them for a moment, "when I go back to California, I intend to have a summer cabin up in the Sierras, and I invite you, one and all, to visit me. You'll have to work for your keep, you understand; cut the firewood and bring the water and wash the pots and pans, and go out and catch fish for breakfast. Ivy can bring his gun and shoot game for us, and I'll bake bread in an iron pot, the old trappers' way, if I haven't forgotten how. Will you come?"

"You bet we will! You know those mountains by heart, I expect?" said Ed Elliott.

She smiled and shook her head. "It would take a lifetime to do that, Ed, more than a lifetime. The Sierras—there's no end to them, and they're magnificent."

Niel turned to her. "Have you ever told the boys how it was you first met Captain Forrester in the mountains out there? If they haven't heard the story, I think they would like it."

"Really, would you? Well, once upon a time, when I was a very young girl, I was spending the summer at a camp in the mountains, with friends of my father's."

She began there, but that was not the beginning of the story; long ago Niel had heard from his uncle that the beginning was a scandal and a murder. When Marian Ormsby was nineteen, she was engaged to Ned Montgomery, a gaudy young millionaire of the Gold Coast. A few weeks before

the date set for their marriage, Montgomery was shot and killed in the lobby of a San Francisco hotel by the husband of another woman. The subsequent trial involved a great deal of publicity, and Marian was hurried away from curious eyes and sent up into the mountains until the affair should blow over.

To-night Mrs. Forrester began with "Once upon a time." Sitting at one end of the big sofa, her slippers on a foot stool and her head in shadow, she stirred the air before her face with the sandalwood fan as she talked, the rings glittering on her white fingers. She told them how Captain Forrester, then a widower, had come up to the camp to visit her father's partner. She had noticed him very little—she was off every day with the young men. One afternoon she had persuaded young Fred Harney, an intrepid mountain climber, to take her down the face of Eagle Cliff. They were almost down, and were creeping over a projecting ledge, when the rope broke, and they dropped to the bottom. Harney fell on the rocks and was killed instantly. The girl was caught in a pine tree, which arrested her fall. Both her legs were broken, and she lay in the cañon all night in the bitter cold, swept by the icy cañon draught. Nobody at the camp knew where to look for the two missing members of the party—they had stolen off alone for their foolhardy adventure. Nobody worried, because Harney knew all the trails and could not get lost. In the morning, however, when they were still missing, search parties went out. It was Captain Forrester's party that found Marian, and got her out by the lower trail. The trail was so steep and narrow, the turns round the jutting ledges so sharp, that it was impossible to take her out on a litter. The men took turns carrying her, hugging the cañon walls with their shoulders as they crept along. With

her broken legs hanging, she suffered terribly—fainted again and again. But she noticed that she suffered less when Captain Forrester carried her, and that he took all the most dangerous places on the trail himself.

"I could feel his heart pump and his muscles strain," she said, "when he balanced himself and me on the rocks. I knew that if we fell, we'd go together; he would never drop me."

They got back to camp, and everything possible was done for her, but by the time a surgeon could be got up from San Francisco, her fractures had begun to knit and had to be broken over again.

"It was Captain Forrester I wanted to hold my hand when the surgeon had to do things to me. You remember, Niel, he always boasted that I never screamed when they were carrying me up the trail. He stayed at the camp until I could begin to walk, holding to his arm. When he asked me to marry him, he didn't have to ask twice. Do you wonder?" She looked with a smile about the circle, and drew her finger tips absently across her forehead as if to brush away something—the past, or the present, who could tell?

The boys were genuinely moved. While she was answering their questions, Niel thought about the first time he ever heard her tell that story; Mr. Dalzell had stopped off with a party of friends from Chicago; Marshall Field and the president of the Union Pacific were among them, he remembered, and they were going through in Mr. Dalzell's private car to hunt in the Black Hills. She had, after all, not changed so much since then. Niel felt to-night that the right man could save her, even now. She was still her indomitable self, going through her old part, but only the stage hands were left to listen to her. All those who had shared in fine undertakings and bright occasions were gone.

CHAPTER XVIII.

With the summer months Judge Pommeroy's health improved, and, as soon as he was able to be back in his office, Niel began to plan to return to Boston. He would get there the first of August and would go to work with a tutor to make up for the months he had lost. It was a melancholy time for him. He was in a fever of impatience to be gone, and yet he felt that he was going away forever, and was making the final break with everything that had been dear to him in his boyhood. The people, the very country itself, were changing so fast that there would be nothing to come back to.

He had seen the end of an era, the sunset of the pioneer. He had come upon it when already its glory was nearly spent. So in the buffalo times a traveler used to come upon the embers of a hunter's fire on the prairie, after the hunter was up and gone; the coals would be trampled out, but the ground was warm, and the flattened grass where he had slept and where his pony had grazed, told the story.

This was the very end of the road-making West; the men who had put plains and mountains under the iron harness were old; some were poor, and even the successful ones were hunting for rest and a brief reprieve from death. It was already gone, that age; nothing could ever bring it back. The taste and smell and song of it, the visions those men had seen in the air and followed—these he had caught in a kind of afterglow in their own faces, and this would always be his.

It was what he most held against Mrs. Forrester; that she was not willing to immolate herself, like the widow of all these great men, and die with the pioneer period to which she belonged; that she preferred life on any terms. In the end, Niel went away without bidding her good-by. He went

away with weary contempt for her in his heart.

It happened like this—had scarcely the dignity of an episode. It was nothing, and yet it was everything. Going over to see her one summer evening, he stopped a moment by the dining-room window to look at the honeysuckle. The dining-room door was open into the kitchen, and there Mrs. Forrester stood at a table, making pastry. Ivy Peters came in at the kitchen door, walked up behind her, and unconcernedly put both arms around her, his hands meeting over her breast. She did not move, did not look up, but went on rolling out pastry.

Niel went down the hill.

"For the last time," he said, as he crossed the bridge in the evening light, "for the last time." And it was even so; he never went up the poplar-bordered road again. He had given her a year of his life, and she had thrown it away. He had helped the captain to die peacefully, he believed; and now it was the captain who seemed the reality. All those years he had thought it was Mrs. Forrester who made that house so different from any other. But ever since the captain's death it was a house where old friends, like his uncle, were betrayed and cast off, where common fellows behaved after their kind and knew a common woman when they saw her.

If he had not had the nature of a spaniel, he told himself, he would never have gone back after the first time. It took two doses to cure him. Well, he had had them! Nothing she could ever do would in the least matter to him again.

He had news of her now and then, as long as his uncle lived. The judge wrote:

Mrs. Forrester's name is everywhere coupled with Ivy Peters'. She does not look happy, and I fear her health is failing. but

she has put herself in such a position that her husband's friends cannot help her.

And again:

Of Mrs. Forrester, no news is good news. She is sadly broken.

After his uncle's death, Niel heard that Ivy Peters had at last bought the Forrester place, and had brought a wife from Wyoming to live there. Mrs. Forrester had gone West—people supposed to California.

It was years before Niel could think of her without chagrin. But eventually, after she had drifted out of his ken, when he did not know if Daniel Forrester's widow were living or dead, Daniel Forrester's wife returned to him, a bright, impersonal memory.

He came to be very glad that he had known her, and that she had had a hand in breaking him in to life. He has known pretty women and clever ones since then, but never one like her, as she was in her best days. Her eyes, when they laughed for a moment into one's own, seemed to promise a wild delight that he has not found in life. "I know where it is," they seemed to say. "I could show you!" He would like to call up the shade of the young Mrs. Forrester, as the witch of Endor called up Samuel's, and challenge it, demand the secret of that ardor; ask her whether she had really found some ever-blooming, ever-burning, ever-piercing joy, or whether it was all fine play acting. Probably she had found no more than another; but she had always the power of suggesting things much lovelier than herself, as the perfume of a single flower may call up the whole sweetness of spring.

Niel was destined to hear once again of his long-lost lady. One evening as he was going into the dining room of a Chicago hotel, a broad-shouldered man with an open, sunbrowned face, approached him and introduced himself as one of the boys who had grown up in Sweet Water.

"I'm Ed Elliott, and I thought it must be you. Could we take a table together? I promised an old friend of yours to give you a message, if I ever ran across you. You remember Mrs. Forrester? Well, I saw her again, twelve years after she left Sweet Water—down in Buenos Ayres." They sat down and ordered dinner.

"Yes, I was in South America on business. I'm a mining engineer; I spent some time in Buenos Ayres. One evening there was a banquet of some sort at one of the big hotels, and I happened to step out of the bar, just as a car drove up to the entrance where the guests were going in. I paid no attention until one of the ladies laughed. I recognized her by her laugh—that hadn't changed a particle. She was all done up in furs, with a scarf over her head, but I saw her eyes, and then I was sure. I stepped up and spoke to her. She seemed glad to see me, made me go into the hotel, and talked to me until her husband came to drag her away to the dinner. Oh, yes, she was married again—to a rich, cranky old Englishman; Henry Collins was his name. He was born down there, she told me, but she met him in California. She told me they lived on a big stock ranch and had come down in their car for this banquet. I made inquiries afterward and found the old fellow was quite a character; had been married twice before, once to a Brazilian woman. People said he was rich, but quarrelsome and rather stingy. She seemed to have everything, though. They traveled in a fine French car, and she had brought her maid along, and he had his valet. No, she hadn't changed as much as you'd think. She was a good deal made up, of course, like most of the woman down there; plenty of powder, and a little red, too, I guess. Her hair was black, blacker than I remembered it; looked as if she

dyed it. She invited me to visit them on their estate, and so did the old man, when he came to get her. She asked about everybody, and said, 'If you ever meet Niel Herbert, give him my love, and tell him I often think of him.' She said again, 'Tell him things have turned out well for me. Mr. Collins is the kindest of husbands.' I called at your office in New York on my way back from South America, but you were somewhere in Europe. It was remarkable, how she'd come up again. She seemed pretty well gone to pieces before she left Sweet Water."

"Do you suppose," said Niel, "that she could be living still? I'd almost make the trip to see her."

"No, she died about three years ago. I know that for certain. After she left Sweet Water, wherever she was, she always sent a check to the Grand Army Post every year to have flowers put on Captain Forrester's grave for Decoration Day. Three years ago the Post got a letter from the old Englishman, with a draft for the future care of Captain Forrester's grave, '*in memory of my late wife, Marian Forrester Collins.*'"

"So we may feel sure that she was well cared for, to the very end," said Niel. "Thank God for that!"

"I knew you'd feel that way," said Ed Elliott, as a warm wave of feeling passed over his face. "I did!"



THREE SHADOWS

I LOOKED and saw your eyes in the shadow of your hair,
As a traveler sees a stream in the shadow of the wood;
And I said, "My faint heart sighs, ah me! to linger there,
To drink deep and to dream in that sweet solitude."

I looked and saw your heart in the shadow of your eyes,
As a seeker sees the gold in the shadow of the stream;
And I said, "Ah me! What art should win the immortal prize,
Whose want must make life cold and heaven a hollow dream?"

I looked and saw your love in the shadow of your heart,
As a diver sees the pearl in the shadow of the sea;
And I murmured, not above my breath, but all apart,
"Ah, you can love, true girl, and is your love for me?"

Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

by
Henri Murger

Author of



*Scènes de la
Vie de Bohème*

Ali Rodolphe

OSTRACIZED by a churlish landlord, Rodolphe led for a time a nomad life, doing his best to perfect himself in the arts of sleeping supperless, and supping without a bed to follow, with Chance for his chef, and the ground open to the stars for his lodging. No cloud wandered more than he.

Still amid these painful cross events two things did not desert him—to wit, his good humor and the manuscript of "The Avenger," a tragedy which had made the rounds of all the likely openings for dramatic talent in Paris.

But one day, as it befell, Rodolphe, having been conducted to the "jug" for a choregraphic performance a trifle too weird for public taste, found himself face to face with an uncle, a genuine uncle whom he had not seen for an age, in the shape of one Monetti, a stove manufacturer, an authority on chim-

neys, and a sergeant in the National Guard to boot.

Touched by his nephew's misfortune, Uncle Monetti promised to mend matters; how, we shall presently see, if the ascent of six pairs of stairs does not dismay the reader.

So let us grasp the hand rail and climb! Ouf! One hundred and twenty-five steps! Here we are. One step more takes us into the room, another would bring us out at the other side. The place is perhaps small, but it is high up, and besides there is good air up here and a fine view.

The furniture consists of a good selection of chimney cowl, a couple of portable stoves, a few patent grates for economizing fuel—especially if no fuel is put in them—a dozen or so of funnels and fire bricks, and a whole host of warming apparatus; furthermore, to complete the inventory, add to these a

hammock slung from a couple of hooks in the walls, a garden chair with an amputated leg, a chandelier still adorned with a solitary socket, and various fancy articles and objects of art.

As for the second room, a balcony and a couple of dwarf cypresses in pots convert it into a park for the summer.

The tenant of this abode, a young man dressed like a Turk of comic opera, is just finishing his breakfast as we enter, a meal which in itself is a shameless violation of the law of the Prophet, as may be sufficiently seen by the presence of the mortal remains of a knuckle of ham and what was once a full bottle of wine.

Breakfast ended, the youthful Turk extended himself on the floor in Oriental fashion, languidly smoking a nargile marked "J. G.," and while he gave himself up to a sense of Asiatic beatitude, he passed his hand from time to time over the back of a magnificent Newfoundland dog, who would no doubt have responded to these caresses if he had not been made of earthenware.

All at once a sound of footsteps came from the passage, and the door opened to give admittance to somebody who without a word went straight up to a range which did duty as a bureau, drew a roll of papers out of the oven, and subjected them to a close scrutiny.

"What!" cried the newcomer, speaking with a strong Piedmontese accent. "Have you not finished the chapter on 'Ventilation Holes' yet?"

"With your leave, uncle," replied the Turk, "the chapter on 'Ventilation Holes' is one of the most interesting in your work, and requires to be studied with especial care. I am now studying it."

"Wretched boy, it is always the same thing! And my chapter on 'Hot-air Stoves'—how is that going on?"

"The hot-air stove is doing well. By the by, uncle, if you would let me

have a little firewood it would not come amiss. It is a small edition of Siberia up here; I am so cold that I have only to look at the thermometer, and it drops below zero!"

"What! Have you burned a whole fagot already?"

"With your permission, uncle, there are fagots and fagots, and yours was a very little one."

"I will send you a block of patent fuel; it keeps the heat in."

"That is precisely why it gives none out."

"Oh, well, I will send you up a little fagot," returned Monsieur Monetti as he withdrew. "But I want my chapter on 'Hot-air Stoves' to-morrow."

"When the fire comes it will inspire me," called the Turk, as the key was turned a second time in the lock.

If this history were a tragedy, now would be the time to bring in the confidant. His name would be Nouredin or Osman; he would approach our hero with a mixture of discretion and protection in fine and just proportion, and worm his secret out of him with some such lines as these:

What boding grief, my lord, o'erwhelms you now?

And why this pallor on your awful brow?

Did Allah's might my lord's designs arrest?

Did Ali execute his stern behest

And bear to exile under alien skies

The willful fair whose beauty charmed his eyes?

But this is not a tragedy, and in spite of our pressing need of a confidant, we must do without him.

Our hero is not what he appears to be. The turban does not make the Turk, and the youth is no other than our friend Rodolphe, received into the abode of his uncle, for whom he is in the act of shaping a manual—the "Complete Guide to Chimneys." The fact is that Monsieur Monetti, an enthusiast for his art, had devoted his life to the

science of chimney construction, and had even adapted for his own use a maxim which serves in some sort as a pendant to that of Cicero: "The stove maker is born, not made"—*nascuntur potè . . . liers*, the worthy Piedmontese would cry in moments of lofty enthusiasm. One day it occurred to him to formulate, for the benefit of future races of man, a theoretical code of the principles of an art in the practice of which he excelled. His ideas requiring, however, to be put in a setting which should make them generally intelligible, he had, as we have seen, chosen his nephew for the task. Rodolphe was boarded, lodged, and so forth, and on completion of the "Guide" was to receive a premium of a hundred crowns.

At the outset, and to encourage his nephew to work, Monetti had generously made him an advance of fifty francs. Rodolphe, who had not set eyes on such a sum for nearly a year, was in a fair way to go out of his mind; he issued forth in the company of the coins, for three days nothing was seen of him, and the fourth he returned—alone.

Monetti, having hopes of a red ribbon, was in a hurry to see his manual completed. He put his nephew under lock and key for fear of fresh escapades, and the better to keep him to work took away his clothes, and left instead the disguise in which we have just discovered him.

But in spite of all this, the famous "Guide" went on at a jog-trot pace. Rodolphe's genius was absolutely unsuited to literature of that kind. Monetti avenged himself for his nephew's slothful indifference in the matter of chimneys by making him suffer all sorts of hardships, sometimes cutting down his meals, and frequently cutting off tobacco.

At length, one Sunday when Rodolphe had toiled at the chapter on

"Air Holes" till his brows were covered with the ink and sweat of anguish, he broke the pen, which made his fingers itch, and went to take a walk in his park.

But—as if it had been arranged on purpose to tantalize him and exasperate his cravings—he could not so much as glance in any direction without perceiving the countenance of a man with a pipe at every window.

On the gilded balcony of a newly built house he remarked a dandy, in a dressing gown, chewing the end of an aristocratic Havana. On the floor above sat an artist wafting abroad a fragrant mist of Levantine from a pipe with an amber mouthpiece. Below, at the window of a public house, a fat German was blowing the froth from a pot of beer in the intervals of puffing like a steam engine at a Cudmer pipe, from which dense clouds arose; and in another direction a knot of workmen, their cutty pipes between their teeth, were walking along, singing on their way, to the barrier. Every man in the street, in fact—and there were a good many—was smoking.

"Alack!" Rodolphe exclaimed enviously, "at this hour there is not a creature in the world but smokes save I and my uncle's chimneys." And leaning his brow on the handrail, Rodolphe meditated upon the bitterness of life.

Just then the sound of a prolonged peal of musical laughter came up to him from below. He bent over a little to see whence this burst of merriment proceeded, and perceived that he had been seen by a lodger who occupied the floor immediately beneath—one Mademoiselle Sidonie, a leading lady at the Luxembourg Theater.

Mademoiselle Sidonie came out upon her terrace rolling between her fingers with Castilian dexterity a tiny roll of light tobacco which she took from an embroidered velvet pouch.

"What a handsome tobacco pouch!"

Rodolphe muttered to himself in thoughtful adoration.

"Who is that Ali Baba?" Mademoiselle Sidonie wondered, and in her mind she meditated pretexts for beginning a conversation with Rodolphe, who in fact was engaged in a similar mental process.

"Oh, dear me!" exclaimed Mademoiselle Sidonie, as if speaking to herself. "How tiresome! I have no matches!"

"Will you allow me to offer you some, mademoiselle?" said Rodolphe, and wrapping two or three matches in a scrap of paper, he let them drop on the balcony.

"A thousand thanks!" said Sidonie as she lit her cigarette.

"Oh, heavens, mademoiselle," Rodolphe continued, "may I venture to ask, in return for the slight service which my good angel enabled me to render——"

"What! He is asking something already!" thought Sidonie, honoring Rodolphe with a closer attention. "Ah, these Turks! They are fickle, people say, but very pleasant." Then, raising her face to Rodolphe's, she said aloud, "Speak, monsieur! What do you want?"

"Oh, heavens, mademoiselle, I will only beseech a little tobacco of your charity; I have not had a smoke for two days. Only one pipe——"

"With pleasure, monsieur. But how is it to be done? Will you be so good as to come downstairs?"

"Alas! That is quite out of the question. I am a prisoner, but I will make use of such freedom as I have to avail myself of a very simple device." And fastening a string to his pipe, he let it down to the terrace, where Mademoiselle Sidonie abundantly filled it. Then, with deliberate caution, Rodolphe drew it up again without accident.

"Ah, mademoiselle," he said, "how much improved my pipe would have been if I could have lighted it at your

eyes!" An agreeable pleasantry which has reached its hundredth edition at least, but Mademoiselle Sidonie thought it none the less superb.

"You flatter me," she thought it incumbent upon her to reply.

"Oh, mademoiselle, to me you seem lovely as the Three Graces."

"Decidedly," thought Sidonie, "Ali Baba is very polite. Are you really a Turk?" she inquired.

"Not by vocation, but of necessity. I am a dramatic author, madame."

"And I am an actress," returned Sidonie, adding: "Will you do me the honor of dining and spending the evening with me, monsieur?"

"Ah, mademoiselle, your proposal opens up all heaven to me, but it is impossible to accept it. I am a prisoner, as I have already had the honor of telling you; locked in by my uncle, Monetti, a stove manufacturer, to whom for the present I am acting as secretary."

"Still you can dine with me," returned Sidonie. "Pay attention to what I am going to tell you. I am about to go back into my room, and I will knock on the ceiling. If you will look closely at the spot from which the sound comes, you will find traces of a square hole there, long since closed up. If you can contrive to pull up the board laid across it, we can keep each other company, each in our separate room."

Rodolphe set to work at once, and in five minutes' time had opened up communication between the two chambers.

"The hole is small," said he, "yet not so small but that my heart can pass through it."

"Now we will dine," returned Sidonie. "Lay the cloth in your room, and I will hand up the dishes."

Rodolphe let down his turban by a piece of string and drew it up again laden with provisions; then the poet and actress sat down to dinner, the one above, the other below; and while

Rodolphe's teeth were busy with the food, his eyes devoured Sidonie.

"Alas, mademoiselle!" he remarked, when the meal was over. "Thanks to you, the cravings of hunger are satisfied. Will you not do as much for the cravings of my heart, after so prolonged a fast?"

"Poor boy!" said Sidonie. And mounting on a piece of furniture, she brought her hand to Rodolphe's lips. He covered it with kisses.

"Ah!" he cried. "What a pity that you have not, like Saint Denis, the privilege of carrying your head in your hands!"

After dinner a conversation, half sentimental, half literary, sprang up. Rodolphe talked of his "Avenger," and Mademoiselle Sidonie asked him to read it aloud. So Rodolphe, hanging over the hole in the ceiling, declaimed his tragedy for the benefit of the actress below, who, the better to hear him, had seated herself in an armchair on the top of a chest of drawers. Mademoiselle Sidonie pronounced "The Avenger" to be a masterpiece, and as she was apt to have her own way at the theater, she promised Rodolphe that his play should appear.

Uncle Monetti's footstep, light as the tramp of the commandant, broke in upon their discourse at the very tenderest moment. Rodolphe had only just time to put the board back in its place.

"Stay!" said Monetti, addressing his nephew. "Here is a letter for you. It has been running about after you this month past."

"Let us look at it," said Rodolphe. "Oh, uncle," he cried, "I am rich! The letter informs me that I have been awarded a prize of three hundred francs by an Academy of Floral Games. Quick! My coat and my things, and let me hie to reap my laurels! They await me at the Capitol."

"And how about my chapter on 'Air Holes?'" his uncle retorted coolly,

"Eh? Much that matters! Give me back my things. I am not going tricked out like this——"

"You are not going out at all until the 'Guide' is finished," said his uncle, as he locked in Rodolphe with a double turn of the key.

Left alone, Rodolphe was not long about making up his mind. Tying the bedclothes together, he made one end fast to his balcony railing; and by means of the improvised ladder arrived safely, in spite of the perils of the descent, upon Mademoiselle Sidonie's terrace.

"Who is there?" she cried when Rodolphe tapped on the window panes.

"Can you ask? I am the author of 'The Avenger,' and I have come down to look for my heart, for I let it fall through the hole in your ceiling."

"Wretched young man," said the actress, "you might have killed yourself."

"Listen to me, Sidonie," Rodolphe went on, showing her the newly received letter. "Fame and fortune are smiling upon me, you see—if only love will do the same?"

Next morning Rodolphe contrived to make his escape from his uncle's house by the aid of a masculine disguise which Sidonie found for him; and hurrying away to the representative of the Academy of Floral Games, received a Golden Eglantine of the value of a hundred crowns, a blossom which lived almost as long as roses usually do.

A month afterward Monsieur Monetti received an invitation from his nephew to the first performance of "The Avenger." Thanks to Mademoiselle Sidonie's talent, it was performed seventeen times and brought in forty francs to its author.

Later still, as it was summertime, Rodolphe took up his abode in the Avenue de Saint Cloud—on the fifth branch of the third tree to the left as you come from the Bois de Boulogne.

The Constant Nymph



by
Margaret Kennedy
In Three Parts ... Part II

THE Sanger household, established in a chalet on a mountain pasture in the Tyrol, fully justified the name by which it was known throughout Europe—"Sanger's Circus." There were seven children. Two, by Sanger's first marriage—Caryl and Kate—were born when he was a struggling young musician, still quite unknown. The four next in line—Antonia, Teresa, Paulina, Sebastian—were all brilliant, wayward, dowered with the beauty and charm of their aristocrat mother, who had been Evelyn Churchill before she ran away to marry Sanger, then rising into the full maturity of his power. The seventh child—Susan, was a "harpy in embryo," very like her mother, Linda, who had, since Evelyn's death, been the nominal head of Sanger's house.

Besides the family, there was a constant procession of guests at the Karindehütte: Lewis Dodd, a young composer, friend and pupil of Sanger's; Jacob Birnbaum, a wealthy young Jew, who loved Sanger, and, after him, his daughter Antonia; Kiril Trigorin, a designer of ballets, to whom Linda had taken a fancy.

These people, drawn together by Sanger, were stunned by his sudden death, which, while it established his fame as a composer, left them, as it were, with the earth cut out from under them. To their rescue came Robert

Churchill, Evelyn's brother, and his niece Florence, to secure the future of Evelyn's children.

CHAPTER VIII.

FLORENCE found the young Sangers quite charming. Uncle Robert did not. The beauty of the Alpine spring had not, perhaps, molded his mind sufficiently; he showed no signs of sharing the gay serenity of mood which enabled her to find everything at the Karindehütte either delightful or funny. His new nieces especially appalled him; several times during that first lunch he had looked at their dripping hair and shuddered. And he had blenched at some strong expressions used by them when they burned their mouths with hot soup.

Nor was he moved toward the three young strangers, who looked, to his mind, very like a trio of young ruffians. And in this Florence was more inclined to support him.

Mr. Dodd she placed rather differ-

ently, though he was, in appearance, the least presentable of the three. "The Symphony in Three Keys" gave him the right to look like a tramp if he pleased. She could, however, understand why Robert had condemned him as the worst of the lot. He had been ostensibly rude, while the others were only too civil. His eagerness to conciliate the lady did not carry him as far as politeness to the old gentleman, and Robert Churchill's manner to a young man did not recommend him to one who had thrown off all authority at the age of sixteen. To Florence he remained courteous, and when she relieved his worst anxieties by a timely chuckle at Paulina's language, he gave her a swift smile, so intimate and brilliant that it startled her. Then he turned grave again and offered her salad in his shy, hesitating voice, so that she hardly knew what to make of him. Yet the charm of that smile remained the most real thing in an amusing but very unreal day. After lunch they drove up to the Karindehütte and were regaled, almost immediately, with another meal, a sort of supper, which was eaten in an atmosphere of tense, strained embarrassment. Every member of Sanger's circus, from Roberto to Susan, had become aware of the necessity for good behavior. Their desperate efforts were rather exhausting, and Florence retired early to sleep, in tolerable comfort, in the room which had once belonged to Sanger.

She awoke next morning in a mood of remote, impregnable happiness, and, while she dressed, she looked out, in the pocket Shakespeare which always traveled with her, that passage in "The Winter's Tale" beginning:

Thou'rt perfect then our ship hath touch'd upon

The deserts of Bohemia?

The deserts of Bohemia was an apt description of the place as seen by poor Uncle Robert. For herself the wilderness was flowering like a garden. The

words of the scene still ran in her head when, standing at the top of the stairs, she looked down and saw Lewis and the children eating their porridge in the hall. She remembered the warning:

Go not too far i' the land!

This place is famous for the creatures of prey
That keep upon it.

The mysterious lady who lurked in her room with a headache was very possibly a creature of prey. Nor did the term sit badly upon the two fat youths, the Jew and the Russian. But these amusing, pathetic children, this mild and bashful young peasant, with his wonderful talent and his gentle voice, were surely a nicer kind of inhabitant. They were with her inside the magic circle where all the world was gay and innocent and funny.

She had forgotten that creatures of prey have often an engaging appearance.

If she had come down a moment earlier she might have heard some pretty language, for Lewis was out of humor. He had passed a bad night, his head ached atrociously, and he had come to breakfast in that sort of mood which always roused Teresa to call him their sunbeam. He succeeded almost immediately in making both the girls cry and even drew oaths from the placid Sebastian. But it is to his credit that he endeavored to pull himself together when their lady cousin appeared. He talked to her quite politely if a little morosely, and presently began to explain the difficulty of producing Sanger's operas, a subject which greatly interested him. The general atmosphere of the breakfast table brightened and grew more cordial. Florence knew a great deal about the difficulties of producing opera. In some ways she knew more than Lewis. She told him all about a new scheme for the state financing of British opera.

"I wonder that you had not heard of it," she exclaimed; and then, after a

slight hesitation, she added: "It was started by my friend, Sir Bartlemy Pugh."

She had many distinguished friends and she always introduced their names in this fashion in order, perhaps, to warn people that they must be careful what they said. But here her caution was wasted; Lewis, who shared Sanger's opinion of Great Britain, showed no signs of having ever heard of Sir Bartlemy Pugh, though as a musician he certainly ought. Nor was he quite as attentive as he should have been when she explained the scheme for endowed opera. He was just going to be rather rude about it when Teresa averted the catastrophe by breaking in and asking, with derisive solicitude, after his dreadful headache.

Florence did not altogether like being interrupted. She had a good deal more to say and this untimely intrusion of a child's banter broke up the conversation. Before turning to another topic she took silent stock of her young cousin, looking her up and down, and, for the first time, mentally separating her from the rest of the family. Decidedly she was the least attractive of them; in feature and person she might almost have been called ugly, though improvement was possible if, on a richer diet, she should take it into her head to grow. The meagerness of her undernourished body contrasted ill with a certain amplitude of scale in her face, which was round and firm, with a finely curved chin and large, wide-set eyes. Her mouth was small, and, though the fullness of her lips gave it generosity, there was a sardonic turn about it which Florence did not like to see in so young a girl. And her tone, when she asked after Mr. Dodd's headache in that pert way, was a great deal too assured and intimate.

It was a pity that he had a headache. Florence was very sorry to hear of it and recommended that he should dose

himself with aspirin and lie down in the dark till it was better. This he agreed to do, but first he strolled out with her upon the mountainside in order to put in a good word for the girls. He informed her diffidently that they needed looking after.

"Oh, but that's obvious," she agreed with a laugh.

"It's not their fault, I mean," he said eagerly. "This house and the way they've been brought up. If you think at first that they are a little wild, you mustn't mind."

"Of course not. I think them such dears! They shall all come back with us and I'll find a nice school for them and for Sebastian, too. What a funny little boy he is!"

"Sebastian?" He looked blank. "A school for him?"

"He wants looking after quite as much as the girls."

"Perhaps. But schools! Some boys can't do with them. I doubt if he could. At the school where I was——"

He broke off, and she asked in amusement if he had not been able to do with his school. He told her that he had run away and that he believed Sebastian would do the same. He told her of Sebastian's recent excursion, which amused her very much, but she would rather have heard how old he was when he ran away and what he had done since. She steered the conversation in that direction and learned eventually that he had been rather older than Sebastian—sixteen to be exact—and that he had maintained himself by playing the cornet in a circus band.

He spent the rest of the morning swallowing aspirin in a darkened room and thus missed the thrilling departure of Linda, Susan, and Trigorin, which shook the rest of the house like a tornado.

Caryl, on his return, was much shocked to discover that the English relations, upon whom so much depended,

had arrived with so little warning. Linda obstinately guarded her room, and it was Birnbaum who hit upon the stratagem whereby she was finally ejected. He suggested that Trigorin should be asked to go, opining that Linda would incontinently follow rather than let him slip through her fingers. Caryl accordingly interviewed Trigorin and suggested, very civilly, that he might go down to the hotel since they were rather crowded by the unexpected arrival of the Churchills. It was a difficult thing to say, for they were all very much indebted to Trigorin, who had produced ready money, whenever it was required, all the time that he had been there. No one else had any, except Jacob Birnbaum; and he, though he could be generous on a large scale, had a curious dislike of parting with small sums. Trigorin had provided them with food ever since Sanger's death and he had lent Kate her fare to Leipzig. But he was most considerate and agreed to go at once, with many polite regrets that he had, perhaps, already stayed too long. Before he went he sought out Uncle Robert and handed him a check for five hundred pounds, insisting that it was a privilege to do anything for Sanger's children.

"Never again," he said sadly, "shall I have a friend like Mr. Sanger."

And he turned away, so much overcome that Robert did not like to argue the question any further with him.

Jacob was right. Linda no sooner heard the tidings than she sprang from her bed, declaring that she and Susan could not possibly stay in a house where they were not wanted. If Caryl insisted on turning her out, she would pack up and go. And pack she did, in a kind of cyclone which ravaged the house and left it strangely bare. The family were so much relieved by these symptoms of exodus that they never inquired what she took with her, and it was not until much later that they dis-

covered all that was gone. She took several valuable autograph letters, a presentation clock, a gold cigarette case given to Sanger by Wagner, and every small article of value that came in her way, including all the spoons and forks. Two men, summoned from the valley, staggered off down the hill with her heavy boxes on their shoulders and, half an hour later, she quitted Sanger's house forever.

She came downstairs just as Trigorin was taking leave of the family in the hall. She had dressed herself in the deepest black; a long veil hung from her hat and hid most of her yellow hair. In one hand she held Susan, who was all tied up with black ribbons, and in the other she displayed a handkerchief with a black border. Roberto trotted apologetically behind her, bearing a green-leather dressing case. She looked so majestic and so mournful, so authentically widowed, that even Robert Churchill had a qualm of uneasiness and wondered if they were not treating her barbarously in insisting that she must go.

"Come, Kiril," she said to Trigorin. "Let's go. If I'm turned out, I'm turned out, and there's an end of it. I'm not going to make a fuss, though there's some that might."

She had determined, apparently, to take no direct notice of the Sangers or the Churchills, and when Susan gave a loud sniff she said to nobody in particular:

"She's crying for her daddy, poor little mite! You wouldn't think, the way she's treated now, that she was his favorite child. Come, love! We aren't wanted here. Will you carry my dressing case down the hill for me, please, Kiril? Roberto has it."

Trigorin looked doubtfully at his own suit cases, but made an effort to comply. He was wrestling with the problem of picking up all three at once, and Linda was half out of the door when

the scene began. Antonia darted forward crying:

"You mustn't take that! It's my dressing case."

"What's that?" exclaimed Linda, coming back. "You give it here if you please. It's mine. I've had it these five years."

"Tisn't yours," cried Antonia, snatching it up and dodging round behind Birnbaum. "It ought to be mine. It was my mother's."

"What's that got to do with it?" retorted Linda. "It's mine now. Your dad gave it to me. You give it back directly!"

"I won't! You're a thief!" screamed Antonia. "He never gave you my darling mother's things. You stole them."

"Tony! Tony! Let her have it," whispered Birnbaum. "It is old—not worth fighting for. I will give you a better one."

It was indeed old—a perfect derelict of a dressing case—so stained, scratched, and battered that no self-respecting woman would have cared to claim it. There were marks on it for every haphazard journey taken by Sanger's circus for the past seventeen years. But, as Antonia held it up for the others to look, there was discernible a faint E. N. C. stamped on the side.

"Evelyn Napier Churchill!" she said. "That's my mother."

Robert remembered it. He and Charles had given it to their sister on her twenty-first birthday.

"Yes, it is hers," he said. "But it must be quite worthless by now. Let her have it, Antonia!"

He wanted, at any cost, to end an intolerable situation. So did everybody but the chief combatants. Antonia clung to the dressing case and cursed Birnbaum for interfering. Linda, having worked herself up into a fine rage, was prepared to let them have a piece of her mind.

"I don't leave this house without it!" she shouted. "You call me a thief? What are you, I should like to know? You turn me out. You treat me as if I was dirt. What better are you? Tell me that. And what better was your mother? Think I don't know——"

"Tony! Don't listen to her! Don't answer her!" exhorted Florence, for Antonia was preparing to fly at Linda. "Come away!"

"Don't you worry with her, miss," advised the woman. "She's not fit for you to touch, not by a long chalk. She's an artful little—and no better than what she should be. You ask Mr. Birnbaum there if——"

"Here's the bag," cried Caryl, snatching it and hurling it at her, while Florence and Birnbaum forcibly held Antonia down. "Take it and go, for goodness' sake! You'll miss your train."

"Yes, madame! You'd really better hurry," advised Uncle Robert, who, watch in hand, was trying to be impressive and gentlemanly.

"Go?" finished Linda. "Yes, I should think I am going! I wouldn't stay here for anything in the world, not with all I've seen going on. If you're all so particular, I wonder at you for bringing the young lady here!"

And with that she took herself off. Trigorin, after some frenzied antics, managed to pick up all the baggage and followed her without further farewell. Three times during the first hundred yards did he drop one of his burdens, while the family, utterly shattered by the storm which had gone over them, watched him from the window. Sebastian remarked with some glee that he had panted and puffed a good deal when he first came up, but that he would find going down even more strenuous. Linda's black, fluttering draperies disappeared round the first corner and a sort of sigh passed through the group of children. The resolute enmity died out of their faces; they had detested her

for eight years and were now prepared to forget her in as many minutes. When, for the fourth time, Trigorin dropped something, kind Caryl would stay no longer; he went out and carried the disputed dressing case to the bottom of the hill where a peasant's cart was awaiting the travelers.

Up at the house Florence was the only person who could not share in the general rejoicing. She was conscious of having lost a little of the morning's enchantment. She could not be quite sure, now, that everything at the Karin-dehütte would invariably amuse her. The struggle over the dressing case had been rather horrible in the light which it cast upon the more intimate history of Evelyn Churchill. Nor was there anything funny in the reflection that Evelyn's children had grown up under the dominion of a foul-tongued harpy.

But the harpy had now flapped her black wings and sailed away and the creatures of prey about the establishment were fewer by two, not counting Susan, who was obviously a harpy in embryo. The young Jew remained, but he was not really so bad, and was, moreover, quite genuine in his offer to pay for Sebastian's education. It was determined, in a consultation among the elders that afternoon, that the four children should be removed immediately to England, and, in the autumn, should be put to school. Robert could recommend very highly a small preparatory school for Sebastian, and Florence was all for sending the three girls to Cleeve Ladies' College, where she had received her own education. Robert had his doubts about the wisdom of this, but since his chief objection was that no reputable establishment would take them, he was overruled. Florence knew Cleeve; she vowed that, as nieces of Charles Churchill and daughters of a musician of dawning fame, they would be welcome at her old school. Cleeve, she said, would overlook a great many

shortcomings in such a case and her father would use his influence. There seemed to be more real difficulty in the task of persuading the girls to go. They pulled very long faces when they were told of the arrangements which had been made for them.

"But you will enjoy it," said Robert encouragingly. "You will make plenty of little friends and you will learn how to play games."

This mystified them very much; it was the last thing they would have expected to hear of any school. They explained that they knew how to play games. He tried to convey to them some idea of the importance of games in an English school and they became very dismal indeed. Antonia stoutly declared that nothing would induce her to play games. Her sisters, being children, might submit, but she was grown up and would have everybody know it. She was too old to go to school.

"In England the big girls all play," Robert assured her. "My little daughter, Hilda, is older than you; she is seventeen. And she loves her school and doesn't want to leave it. She's captain of the school hockey."

The four looked at each other, and though they were too courteous to say so they feared that their cousin Hilda must be a terrible simpleton. Sebastian said at last:

"Well, thank you very much. We'll think it over. I suppose it will do if we let you know by to-morrow?"

"Let us know! What?" asked Robert, gaping.

"If we want to come. Of course we see it's most kind of you to think of it, don't we, girls? But we'd like a little time to consider it, you know."

"If you want to come! My dear boy! You'll do what you are told, let me tell you. It's no question for you to decide."

"I think it's more important to us

than to anybody else," argued Sebastian. "We may not like going to school."

"That will be excessively foolish of you, but I doubt if it will otherwise have any importance whatever."

"We don't belong to you," stated Sebastian, still pleasantly reasonable. "I mean, there's no law, is there, to give you power over us? Nobody made you our guardian, did they?"

"Er—hmp—um!" snorted Robert, who had no answer ready.

Florence stifled her laughter with a violent effort, for she knew that this question of legal guardianship was, to his cautious mind, a grievous problem. She made a sign to him and said:

"Yes. Talk it over and we'll discuss it again to-morrow."

"We'd like to consult our friends," explained Teresa.

"Your friends!" exploded Robert. "May I ask what friends are those? Mr. Dodd! He has nothing whatever—"

Again Florence checked him.

"I expect you'll find Mr. Dodd thinks it a very good plan," she said. "But do ask him."

Later she said to her uncle:

"It's much better to avoid trouble if possible. They'd better think that they are going to school of their own choice; it will dispose them to try and adapt themselves. And it will do them no harm to talk it over among themselves."

"I don't agree with you, Florence. It's high time they learned to do what they are told without cavil or question. They haven't the slightest idea of discipline."

"They'll learn all that at school, poor dears! They don't recognize the shades of the prison house yet; they think they are their own masters. It will come by degrees. I don't want any battles till we have got them all to England."

"I never saw more impudent, ill-mannered, disobedient young people in all my life. This Dodd——"

"I think better of that young man than you do," said Florence. "And I can tell you this. He's most anxious that they should go to school. I'm sure he'll advise them sensibly about that. He's devoted to them."

And she was right, for he did advise them very sensibly. They had, however, no opportunity for consulting him until late in the evening, for he was away all day in the mountains trying to walk off his sleeplessness. When he came back he brought with him a little Persian kitten which he had bought at a farm as a peace offering to the girls for his recent ill-humors. They were in bed, so he took it up and gave it to them.

"Oh, Lewis," began Teresa at once, "wait a minute! We want your advice. Florence says we have to go to school in England."

He sat down on the edge of the bed where Teresa, Paulina, and the kitten lay curled up in a little heap.

"I expect you'll like that," he suggested.

"Oh! Do you really think we shall? Tony! Do you hear that? Lewis thinks——"

"Yes, I heard," mumbled Antonia from the other bed. "I don't want to hear what Lewis thinks, or what you think, or what anybody thinks. I shall decide for myself."

And she hid under the bedclothes.

"I think it would be a very good thing," Lewis told them. "Perhaps you won't like it at first. You may find that you are a little different from the other women, but you must try to get on with them! You must indeed. It's a good thing, you know, to be like other people if you can manage it. It's happier——"

Teresa thought this such a mighty odd thing for Lewis to say that she sat up and kissed him, murmuring:

"Who'd have thought it!"

He sat a little longer, stroking her fair hair and feeling suddenly quite wretched at the idea of parting with her

so soon. He had not thought of separation in his anxiety for their welfare. But perhaps he might come to England and pay them a visit. He suggested this and they brightened up. School as he described it did not sound so very bad, after all. In another half minute he was meaning to go across to his room in the annex and begin upon his arduous night's toil. But he kept putting it off, though all the time, as he solaced himself with Teresa's company, his mind was circling round the labor to which he must shortly address himself. To stay and stroke her hair was a little respite. He was still there, staving off the evil hour, when Florence came with a candle to bid her cousins good night. She heard him say:

"And then I expect they'll teach you needlework. And you'll make yourselves the most lovely dresses."

"Oh, Florence," cried Teresa. "Here's Lewis says we must certainly go."

Antonia poked up her head in order to see what was happening. She had a faint idea that Florence might not be pleased to find Lewis there, although he was giving them such good advice. But of this there was no sign; Florence opened her eyes for a second or two and then smiled at him very kindly. He, on the other hand, was visibly deranged. Antonia observed with amusement that he was staring at Miss Churchill as though he had never seen a young lady in her dressing gown before.

And it was improbable that he had ever seen one quite like that. She was lovely. Her dark plaits, her moccasin slippers, the Paisley shawl flung round her blanketwise, all gave her a boyish look, like a decorative, fairy-tale Red Indian, scarcely older than Antonia. Lewis was positively frightened. He had thought her beautiful before, but he had thought it without emotion. Now he was aware of a most disturb-

ing revolution in his system; it was as if the terrific energies scattered by the shock of Sanger's death were again focused upon a single object, as if the storms of the past weeks had been but the prelude of this significant event. The thing took him perfectly unawares. He jumped up, stammered a good night to them all, and withdrew hastily before his confusion should be betrayed.

That night he did no work, though he flung up and down his room for hours, endeavoring to think of his lost concerto and haunted instead by quite other visions. He wished that he had gone away before this cousin of Tessa's had come to disturb him. He had told Kate that he was just ripe for folly; at no time in his life had he been overwise. But never, never had he fallen a victim to so inconvenient an obsession as this.

CHAPTER IX.

Florence woke every morning, rapidly, to the tune of cow bells.

She had dragged her bed close to the window, and from her pillow she could see the pale pink tops of the range opposite and the long shafts of light which the rising sun sent down their steep sides, spearing right down into the hidden, mysterious night below. Day began at the Karindehütte a full hour before it visited the valley farms.

Never, since her childhood, had she lived so completely for the present, grudging every passing moment that brought her nearer to the inevitable return. It was an interval of utter contentment which seemed to have no relation to the rest of her life. She had a curious feeling as though this sensation of exquisite irrelevance was the result of living so high up; she was beautifully isolated on the top of her mountain. She was so much aware of the impermanence of her pleasure that she was no sooner awake than a long-

ing would seize her to jump up and run out into the mild warmth of the early sun. She was often dressed and ranging over the pass before Roberto, crying "*Scusa!*" burst into her room with the enormous teapot which he believed Kate to have said that the English lady would require every morning at seven o'clock.

She was preparing to begin the day with one of these early expeditions when Antonia knocked at the door and asked if she might come in and talk a little.

"What lovely brushes!" she said, inspecting the dressing table. "You do keep your things nicely. Linda had gold ones, but she never washed them. Listen, Florence! I don't mean to go to school. Why should I? I'm grown up."

She was wearing a very short and ragged nightgown and looked anything but grown up, but Florence was too wise to say so. She agreed sympathetically that it would be more difficult for Antonia than for the others.

"Lewis says we'll like it. But what does he know about it? He's never been to a girls' school himself."

"What sort of people does he belong to?" asked Florence, who could not resist an opportunity of finding out more about him.

"Oh, I don't know. He never speaks of them. I only heard him speak of his home once, and then he said they had boiled mutton and caper sauce every day there. I expect that wasn't true."

"Still, even if they had it every other day, it might seem rather intolerable to a budding ascetic," mused Florence.

"A budding——" began Antonia.

But she did not ask what an ascetic was, in case Florence should say she was ignorant and needed to go to school. Instead she cried appealingly:

"You know—I should just hate to play hockey."

"Well, my dear, if you really hate it very much, we might arrange something else for you. But I think you must go somewhere to learn to earn your own living and be independent. It's not easy for unqualified women to get posts."

"Why should I earn my own living?" asked Antonia in great astonishment.

Florence, with considerable delicacy, brought her to understand her penniless and dependent situation. She became very thoughtful and then asked slowly:

"But who will pay for us at school? That will cost a lot."

"Mr. Trigorin and Mr. Birnbaum have been very generous."

"Ike!" She swung round in amazement. "He's paying?"

"Ike?"

"Jacob Birnbaum. We call him Ike. You say he's paying?"

"Yes. For your brother—and for you, in part, as well."

"I won't have it!"

"My dear child! What do you mean?"

"I won't go to England if Ike pays. I won't swallow any food that Ike pays for. I'll starve. I'll——"

"What has he done?"

"Done? It's what he is! He's a stupid beast. He's cruel!"

"Why, Antonia——"

"I hate him. I wish he was dead."

"Has he—has he treated you badly in any way?" asked Florence very gravely.

Antonia pulled herself up and said loftily:

"Oh, no! He couldn't. He's too stupid. But I won't have his money."

"But why are you so indignant? He was your father's friend."

"That's nothing. So was Sanger a beast—often. And I'm not indignant. He's beneath my notice. I never think of him at all. When I look at him I just laugh."

"Well! You're a difficult girl to understand."

"He thinks I ought to go to school, does he?" stormed Antonia. "He thinks I don't know enough and ought to be taught some more? He thinks a deal too much. He's a walking mountain of impudence, that man! He shall hear what I think about it before he's an hour older. School!"

She made for the door, but Florence held her back, exclaiming:

"My dear Tony! He's probably asleep at this hour."

"Oh, no! He gets up early and helps Caryl and Lewis sort Sanger's papers."

"Well, then, do put on some more clothes, if you must go and insult him. Truly, Antonia, you must be rather more decent in your language and deportment. He'll only tell you that you are an ignorant little girl who needs to go to school because she doesn't know how to behave."

Antonia was struck by this view. She marched off to the girls' room and, to the astonishment of her sisters, made an elaborate toilet. She scrubbed her face and hands and combed her hair. Then she selected from the common wardrobe on the floor a passably clean frock and apron. Jacob, who was alone in Caryl's room when she came to him, was as much surprised by her inordinate neatness as by her offering to address him. For some days past she had refused to answer when he spoke to her.

"Well, Ike! I hear you think I need to be sent to school. That's lovely and generous of you, but as it happens I didn't ask for your kind charity. You can keep your wonderful money, that you think such a lot about, for some other girl. And be careful how you go spending it, for it's the only thing that makes anybody look at you."

"You will go to school if your uncles wish it," he said in a surly voice.

"I tell you I'd sooner be dead than kept by your money, so there!"

"And you shall tell this to the English uncle?" he jeered.

"I will."

"He will say, but why is that?"

"I'll tell him. I'll tell him everything."

"Then he will send you away, as he sent Linda. He will throw you out of the house. Your lady cousin also——"

Antonia turned pale. She still, despite the warnings of experience, believed what was said to her. She said, a little uncertainly:

"I'll tell them it wasn't my fault. I'll say you made me so drunk I couldn't help myself. You know you did."

"Did I force you to stay a whole week, eating, drinking, spending my money? That was your own wish. You could have left me at any time. They will ask why you did not."

"I stayed just to show you how little I cared."

"Tell them that! And see what he will say."

"I don't mind if he does throw me out. I hate every one here."

"How will you keep yourself? Will you work? I think not. You will starve."

She had a private idea that she could without difficulty become a famous prima donna. But the constant raillery which her family poured upon this ambition had taught her to keep it to herself. She was tired of hearing Kate exalted. She said at once the thing which she thought most likely to torment him:

"I shall find some one to take care of me."

Jacob, his large face pale with fury, was silent for a few seconds, hesitating between a choice of outrageous replies. Then he said with a sort of anguished bitterness:

"You will run away after a week?"

"No, I shan't. I'd have stayed longer with you, only I wanted to be back for Sanger's birthday. I was enjoying myself."

"But were you? Yet you would not

come back?" he cried, catching at a new idea.

She said instantly that she would, mocking his self-flattery in supposing that she hated him. No! She would not run away again, unless she met somebody nicer. That might, of course, be soon.

He reflected that, if she came to him a second time, she would not run away because she would have nowhere to go. Sanger's circus, her only home, was breaking up. She would be, this time, defenseless and altogether at his mercy. He could make her pay a little for her insolence. Since she would not love him, he might find some relief in seeing her suffer. The idea of all that he could do to her filled his imagination with a dark happiness. He turned his back and began tying up bundles of papers, afraid to look at her lest she might read his purpose in his eyes and run away.

"I would rather be with you than in England," she said.

"That is well."

"And I like München."

"You will not go there; it is too near. Your uncle might follow us. This summer I go to Smyrna and you shall come with me."

He stole a glance to see how she took this, but was obliged to turn quickly away, she looked so young and so white.

"Oh, yes!" she agreed in a very little voice. "You're sure that—that it would be quite convenient to you?"

"I wish it," he said grimly.

"Because—if it wasn't—I expect I could get work or something. I'll only come if it's convenient to you. I don't want charity. I should think I'd be rather in your way in a place like Smyrna. What did you say?"

He had thrown down his bundle with an oath of renunciation. For he could not do it. Two minutes was the longest space of time in which he could really wish to treat her unkindly.

Struggle as he might, he could not help but love her dearly. He gave it up. Cruelty was not natural to him, in any case, and he could often have wished himself a baser man than he was, bewildered by the strife between his appetites and his intrinsic benevolence.

For an instant he stood quite still, regarding curiously the abyss which had for a moment invited him, as a man on the edge of a precipice will play with the idea of a plunge and pass on unscathed. Then he wrenched his mind away from it and forgot it. He said:

"We will not go to Smyrna. You must not think that your uncle will turn you out of the house. I was laughing at you. You need not be afraid; he will protect you. And your cousin will be sorry for you; I think."

"Fool!" taunted the almost vanquished devil within him. "Imbecile! You have lost her."

"I should advise," he continued valiantly, "that you confide in her. It is a pity that you had not such a friend earlier."

"Florence!" cried Antonia, blushing as red as a poppy. "I couldn't possibly tell her."

"Then tell him. He will never turn you out. I am the person whom he will blame."

"You? Aren't you giving him a lot of money for us? I don't see he'll have any business to be blaming you."

"He will think that I am a villain. And that is right."

"Really, Ike, you mustn't talk like that. I don't blame you for that, indeed I don't. There's quite another thing that I can't forgive you for; not that. You mustn't worry."

"I thought," he said, almost to himself, "I thought, if it was not I, it would be some other man. I never meant you harm. How could I know that Sanger would die and leave you with no home? Now what is to be done?"

"There's nothing to be done. It's no concern of yours, Ike. It wasn't your fault that Sanger died."

"But it is my concern. I wish that you would go to England as your uncles have decided. It is safer."

"That's what Lewis says. But I can't let you pay—after—"

"Why not? How shall I ever understand you?"

She was silent, but she looked more friendly. He still had a hope that he might persuade her to go to England. He shyly ventured to assert a fact which had dominated his horizon since his first conscious thought.

"I have so much money!"

It meant very little to her. He had seen that in Munich, and it had continually exasperated him. For though she had snatched at the good things he gave her, he could not persuade himself that he had bought her. She would take nothing away with her, scorning his lavish offers of clothes and jewels. It was the Sanger spirit of conviviality which brought her. She would have been quite as ready to enjoy herself if he had been a poor man; if he had lodged her in a garret and taken her to the cinema instead of the opera.

It was this lordly relish for life, a fiery abundance of spirit enriching everything in its orbit, which had first attracted him to Sanger. He now saw it repeated in Sanger's children. To himself money had always meant too much; it pervaded his entire existence, intervening and robbing him of the full fruits of experience. It had furnished him with all his assets, his pleasures, and the position which he held in the musical world. In moments of depression he was inclined to fear that it had provided his friendships; he used to wonder how many people would have tolerated him without it. He had the instincts of a patriarch and would have liked to found a family, a household, but he despaired of finding one woman

who was not venal. His short association with Tony had taught him that she was neither sensual nor mercenary, and that, in her least thought, she was guided by an impulse which had been denied to him. She demanded only to feel; she asked of life only that it should play a tune to her dancing. A queer wife she would be! A darling wife! The dearest company in the world for the man who could win her love. To have her confidence, to cherish and protect her and give her everything she wanted, to set safeguards about her incautious, headlong career, seemed to him a most satisfactory ambition for a man. His own money would be a benediction, if he could spend it so.

"You should get a husband who will be kind to you," he told her. "You must not waste your beauty always. You should have a home and little babies of your own."

She gave him a quick look under her eyelashes, but said nothing. She had fine, slender hands like her mother. He stood looking at them now. In many ways she was like Evelyn; she had that spark which sets men aflame. It was not only in her beauty, it was in her voice, her laugh, her smallest gesture. It was her portion in that dower of genius which belonged to all her kindred; she carried it like a torch. Beside her he felt like a senseless clod of earth, lacking life, for she was like fire, wonderful, dangerous, necessary. He thought of the children he desired and it seemed to him that they, too, would be dull creatures unless they were also hers. He was wearied of his life. He was no longer young, now that his friend Sanger was dead. He had exhausted the distractions which wealth could bring him; he had nothing to contemplate now but the things that he could never do, the limitations which age would increase. She seemed to offer him escape.

"Could you not marry me? Indeed,

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I love you. I would try to make you happy."

"Ike!" She sprang off the table. "What's come over you? Are you drunk?"

"I am not. I mean it. I want you for my wife. Marry me, and then you need not go to England. You cannot wish to go to England. I would give you——"

This invincible instinct for a bargain betrayed him; he knew it, almost as soon as the words passed his lips. Quick alarm leaped into her eyes and she moved away from him, asserting:

"I want to go away and never see you again."

"Oh, Tony, tell me! You torture me. Why are you still so angry? You say that you can never forgive me; and then you say that I must not blame myself. Why can you not forgive me?"

"For being such a fool!" she said furiously. "For being so stupid. Couldn't you have seen——"

Her lovely eyes filled with tears. She wept for a few minutes, quietly and bitterly, almost with resignation. He would have soothed and comforted her if he had known how, but he dared not touch her lest she should turn on him. He watched her with a torn heart as she sobbed, a little turned away from him, her face hidden in her apron. Presently she made an end of it and looked round, exclaiming in surprise:

"Why, Ike! Are you crying, too?"

He discovered that there were tears on his own face, and, producing a silk handkerchief, he mopped them up in some embarrassment.

"What's the matter?" asked Antonia tactlessly.

"*Du lieber allmächtiger Gott!*" shouted Jacob. "Have I not said? You torture me. Always you are angry and you will not say. How shall I know what you are thinking? You drive me mad."

"Really you are very stupid! Listen!

I'll tell you. When we were down in Genoa, and you asked me the first time, I said I wouldn't. You remember?"

"I remember."

"And then I said I would. Do you know why? Because you looked so very sad. I was very fond of you, then; I wasn't going to have you as unhappy as that. You really looked as if you didn't know how to get on, unless I came. That made me more fond of you; I mean, that a very clever person like you with everything so grand as you have things, should need any one like me to look after him. Do you understand that? But then you annoyed me by boasting about how wonderful everything was at your house and all the things you'd give me. You didn't think that I was going to give you anything; you didn't seem to think I could love you. Really, I might have been Linda! You quite disgusted me. I thought you didn't deserve I should come. And I meant to tease you a little before I had it out with you."

She looked ready to cry again. Jacob, seeing dimly the quarter whence the blow was coming, sat down by the table and hid his face in his hands, bidding her, in a muffled voice, to continue.

"I thought—I thought I'd stay a week, and to punish you I'd never be at all kind until just the end. And the last day, when you would be thinking I was going away, and would be very sad, I'd tell you quite suddenly that you were my dear lover. Then you'd know better forever afterward. I planned I'd tell you when we were out shopping or something, quite casually, so you'd hardly know at first whether to believe it. I thought it would be such fun. But—you spoiled it all."

"I understand."

"You see, I quite trusted you. I thought you'd wait till—till I was ready. I never thought you would play me a trick as you did. It was horrible of you. You couldn't have loved me."

"I did love you. I do now. I always shall."

"If you had, you'd have known. You'd have waited. I can't forgive you for being such a fool. I loved you. I came to München because I loved you. And all of a sudden you turned into an enemy; it nearly killed me."

He said nothing, but stared at her in such palpable misery that she could not endure it. She continued consolingly:

"I'm not angry now. I see you're sorry. You can't help being stupid. I know you didn't mean to be unkind," and then, a little anxiously: "Don't look like that! It's worse than when you were in Genoa. Let's quite forget it."

"I cannot."

"Well, don't look so dreadfully unhappy!"

"There is cause," he stated.

"There's no cause, silly! I've forgiven it."

"I do not forgive myself."

"You can't really be trying then."

"How can I? Consider! I love you. And you have told me how by my own folly I have lost you."

"Soon you'll forget me."

"Never in life."

She looked him over doubtfully and said, after a long pause:

"I believe you're right. I can't bear it; you shan't go on looking like this. Would you like it if I married you?"

"If I would like it! But you must do what is best for you. You should, I think, go to England with the uncle."

"But, Ike, I don't want to go to England with the uncle."

"That name! Must you call me by that name? I detest it."

"Very well, then, Jacob! I don't want to go to England with the uncle. I'd rather stay here with you, because when you start looking as if you'd got toothache I feel as if I love you too much to leave you. Now try to look

pleased. Haven't I said enough? What more do you want?"

"You have said quite enough."

But he took a little time to cheer up and explained to her, after a pause, that his head was thick and resisted a new idea. Also they had traversed so many emotions in half an hour.

"'Methought I was enamored of an ass,'" she quoted fondly.

"You were. You are. You must never expect too much of him. I will interview the uncle immediately."

"Well, don't boast," she advised him, "and perhaps he'll believe you. *Herr je!* This has been quick work!"

They had certainly accomplished a great deal in a short time. Gradually he got more accustomed to these strange, new altitudes which they had achieved, where Tony, with the adaptability of her sex, was already trying her wings. Her delightful security cheered him up, and by the time that Lewis came in, bearing another basket of unsorted letters, he looked like a happy man. Lewis gaped at them, muttered an apology, and was for withdrawing, but they called him back and informed him of their betrothal. He thought that they must have gone out of their senses and was, moreover, much irritated by their complacent appearance so that his congratulations were not given with much warmth.

His own infatuation gathered strength with every day that passed, and with every faint attempt to get the better of it. There was nothing to soothe it in the spectacle of Birnbaum kissing Tony. He stalked off, back to the annex and the concerto in which he seemed to be stuck fast as in a frightful quagmire. Very bitter were his inward comments upon the folly of Jacob in thus sacrificing his independence for the sake of a chit not worth the little finger of Florence Churchill. It was absurd to marry Tony. For the other lady such a sacrifice might pos-

sibly be considered, though the idea was a wild one. Something must be done to abate this fever, for he was beginning to fear that he might go clean distracted. He was ready for a desperate remedy.

"It is better," he said to himself, "it is certainly better to marry than to burn, as Moses puts it."

He was rather pleased with this quotation, dimly recalled from his childhood when he had been made to attend a Sunday school. And of the party at the Karindehütte it is probable that only the despised Robert could have corrected his impression that Moses said it. For Florence had not, unfortunately, read her Bible with quite the same intelligence and attention which she accorded to other and inferior books.

CHAPTER X.

Later in the day Antonia sought out her uncle and confided to him all those circumstances which delicacy had prevented her from mentioning to Florence. The ensuing uproar took some days to subside, for the Churchills were divided in their view of the affair, and Charles, in England, was written to passionately by both parties. Robert was the least surprised of the two; he was scandalized but resigned. An hour with Sanger's circus had put him in a frame of mind to expect any sort of discovery. Having inquired into the circumstances and intentions of Jacob Birnbaum, he was disposed to make the best of a bad business and consent to an immediate wedding.

Florence, on the other hand, was astounded but inclined to be compassionate. Jacob was clearly an unprincipled scoundrel and poor little Tony a victim, undeserving of the punishment implied by so iniquitous a marriage. She should be taken to England and helped to live it down.

But Antonia blankly refused to go

to England. She persisted in saying that she loved Jacob, and that she wished to marry him in spite of his villainy. No persuasions had any effect on her.

It was with a gesture of puzzled resignation that Florence yielded at last, when Charles telegraphed his consent to the marriage.

She could, in any case, spare little time to Antonia's problems, for her own life was proceeding at such a pace that she could scarcely keep up with it. One or two attempts she had made to ignore the thing that was happening to her or to give it a rational interpretation. It was possibly the mountain spring which had invested the world with this new glory and freshness. It was the escape from a life which had begun to confine her. It was anything but the company of Lewis Dodd. So she reasoned until, suddenly, he took his departure. For three days he went away, flying to Innsbruck in a final attempt to break the disastrous spell which had bewitched him.

Florence, who thought for sixty hours that he had gone for good, found that all the beauty round her had become, in the twinkling of an eye, most intolerably sad. She was astonished, humiliated almost, at her own pain, and unable, any longer, to blind herself as to its cause. She was in love; her happiness was gone with him, and she would leave the Tyrol with a wounded heart.

Then, as suddenly, he reappeared. He had not found it possible to remain away and so came back with the single intention of winning her at any cost. She was amused at her own joy and relief; amused, too, when she reflected that for a year or more she had quite earnestly wished to feel all the pains and anxieties of a serious love affair. Her only care now was to drill herself into the thought that he might not, after all, have returned to woo her. Yet she

knew not how otherwise to interpret the absent-minded persistence with which he followed her about. Sternly she forbade to herself the pleasure of romances woven for the future; hourly she broke her resolution. It was so impossible not to make plans. Because, of course, she had determined to marry him.

He belonged, probably, to a different class. But she could put up with that, and, if her family minded it, they must learn better. Like her Aunt Evelyn, she was very democratic. He was a great genius and that ought, surely, to be enough for them. His manners, though primitive, were simple. She tried to imagine him in dress clothes; he would look odd, but not like a waiter. Charles would have to see that she could not be expected to marry anybody ordinary. And for him, if she could but bring him to her views, so much might be accomplished. She had a feeling that he might at first be restive, he was so wild and shy. She believed that he loved her, but she had an idea that the thought of marriage had not, so far, entered his vague head. She would have to put it there. Later on, when his music had been heard rather more, he would need a wife with a certain social standing. She had influence; she knew people. Married to her, he also would know people.

Only one person at the Karindehütte was in the least aware of the state of things between these two. The household, for the most part, was entirely absorbed by the undetermined fate of Antonia. But Tessa, at this time, grew very pale and melancholy. She feared that her friend meant to entangle himself with the English cousin, a piece of folly in itself, and likely, as she thought, to involve them all in the most serious consequences. It would be a climax of the disasters which had befallen them since Sanger's death. She unburdened her mind to Paulina one day, as they

lay out in the forest. They had been discussing Antonia's marriage and Paulina was saying:

"I think it's an excellent idea. Couldn't we all marry somebody and then we needn't go to England?"

"Sebastian couldn't."

"No, but if we were married women, he could come and live with us. Let's get married, Tessa! I'll marry Roberto. I'm sure he'd be quite pleased. He's very obliging."

"Twelve is too young."

"Soon I'll be thirteen. Juliet was thirteen. She was married."

"She was Italian."

"So would I be Italian if I married Roberto. People always take their husbands' nationalities."

"Imbecile that you are! That's got nothing to do with it."

"Don't be a wet blanket! We'd much better both get married. I'll ask Roberto and you ask Lewis. What have you gone so red for? He's very nice; I'd ask him myself only he loves you best."

"I'm too young."

"Not a bit. You can ask him anyhow."

"Oh, I couldn't! I'm too old."

"Too old! I thought you said you were too young!"

"So I did. Dear me! I'm both. I'm at a perfectly horrid age. I'm too old to say what I think. And I'm too young for anybody to want to marry me."

"There, now, you're blushing again! You'll be worse than Kate soon. She used at least to blush regularly; I mean always at the same sorts of things. But you've taken to blushing at nothing at all. You're dreadful."

"You wait till you are my age. You will, too."

"Still I can't see why you should think you are too young for Lewis. You'd suit him much better than an

ordinary woman that expected him always to be bothering about her."

"Would I? Look!"

They were sitting at the edge of the forest, near the bottom of the mountain. Teresa pointed to the field below them where two figures were strolling intimately. Paulina took them in and asked anxiously:

"Do you think he wants her?"

Teresa nodded.

"But he wouldn't marry her!" protested Paulina.

"Yes, he will. She'll make him."

"He's never married anybody before."

"Yes, but she's a lady. If it's anybody like Florence, they have to marry them. Look at Sanger and our mother."

"But she won't have him," persisted Paulina hopefully. "Why should she? Think of all the grand people she knows. She's just being nice to him, like she is to everybody."

"I wouldn't mind his getting her," said Teresa sadly, "if that was all there was to it. But that will only be the beginning, you see! She'll want to take him off and live at that place in England where she comes from, Cambridge. He won't be happy."

"I think it'll be a shame if he gets her. She can't have seen him drunk."

"Of course he hasn't. He's not been drunk since she came."

"And she can't have seen him in a temper. Really in lots of ways he's worse than Sanger. He's not so good-natured, for one thing. Tessa, do you think we ought to tell her?"

"Tell her what?"

"That it wouldn't do at all. There are heaps of things——"

"I can't," said Teresa, who had gone very pale.

"Why not? If she knew——"

"I don't know why not. But I couldn't."

"Well, it would be rather like telling

tales. He belongs to us, really, more than she does. Perhaps she'll find out herself."

This was said in a very low voice for the pair were quite close to them. They were picking flowers of different sorts and saying at intervals that they had got enough, and then crying out over a good one that must be picked.

"Oh," cried Florence, flinging herself down on the grass beside the girls, "did you ever see such flowers? They beat even the Academy pictures of 'Spring in the Austrian Tyrol.'"

"Why is that cow bell sometimes A and sometimes A flat?"

"It isn't the same cow," he told her. "There are two cows on that little hill, but you can't see one because it's behind a rock. If you'll move a little this way I'll point it out to you."

"I'll take your word for it," she declared lightly, moving a fraction of an inch farther away from him. "How lovely the cow bells are! I love waking in the morning very early and hearing them all round the house."

Lewis was about to agree fervently when he caught Paulina's eyes and remembered that he had in her presence expressed himself very freely about the cow bells which woke him early in the morning. He subsided and lay back, flat on the grass, staring up into the sky and smiling. Florence continued to talk. She said how the silent nights impressed her. A distant waterfall was the only thing to be heard in the hushed spaces round the Karindehütte after the cows had been shut up.

"And running water is an enchanting sound," she said. "The most beautiful in the world, don't you think?"

"When I was a boy," said Lewis abruptly, "I used to sleep out on some cliffs in Cornwall. And there were some birds, whole flocks of them—I don't know what they were—used to fly out to sea just before it got light. I remember I woke up once, when the

moon had set and it was quite d-dark, and all the air was full of them. I couldn't see them. I heard wings."

Teresa, on the grass at his side, stirred a little in response to the excitement behind his hesitating, drowsy voice. She knew that some impulse had prompted him to tell them of a supreme moment, one of those instants, rare and indescribable, when the quickened imagination stores up an impression which may become a secret key to beauty, the inspiration of a lifetime. Her mind swung back to meet the mind of that lost boy who had lain awake upon a high, mysterious cliff beside a whispering sea. She, too, heard wings.

Florence was interested, also, and asked if he had lived in Cornwall. No. He had gone there in the holidays. Did he live in the country?

"N-ño. In Bayswater."

He got up. It was evident that he did not like being asked about his childhood, so she desisted. She rose, too, and they made their way up the hill toward the house. The girls remained sitting on the grass, occupied with rather gloomy thoughts. At last Paulina looked sharply at her sister and said:

"There's no use crying about it."

"No use," agreed Teresa.

But the tears poured down her face, whether she would or no, until she conceived the happy idea of trying to water a primula with them. Immediately the flood was dried, after the manner of tears when a practical use has been found for them.

"And it would have been interesting," said Paulina sorrowfully, "to see if it would have made any difference to the primula."

CHAPTER XI.

It was discovered that Jacob and Antonia would have to be married in Vienna, owing to their complicated nationalities, and they would have to stay

there at least a fortnight before all the preliminaries could be got through. Robert Churchill considered that it was his business to escort them.

"Though it will very disagreeable," he said gloomily to Florence. "But I feel I must go. I don't altogether trust that young Jew. I must make sure that he really does marry the girl this time. But it keeps us here so long; that's the worst of it. And I don't like leaving you here alone. When is that fellow Dodd going to take himself off? I wish Caryl would give him a hint."

"He's quite harmless."

"I don't know so much about that. Personally, I've taken a great dislike to him. A very great dislike. He's the worst of the ragtag and bobtail we found hanging round here."

"I find him very interesting," Florence said. "He's strange. I've been wondering about his origin. He speaks like a—like an educated man. I'm inclined to think that he's of humble birth—a peasant, perhaps—but that he's mixed a good deal with cultivated people all his life. He must have raised himself——"

"Raised," said Robert. "He looks like a scarecrow! What on earth do you see in him that you could call raised?"

"Well, there are his wonderful gifts."

"Presumably he had those to start with. I should have said that they didn't seem to have raised him at all. You can't be serious, Florence! The fellow is a most terrible boor."

"In a way—he's an ascetic."

"Humph!"

"Asceticism and bohemianism are very much alike," she told him with energy. "St. Francis of Assisi was a true bohemian. Great simplicity of mind is almost incompatible, in a way, with a high degree of civilization. I was thinking, only last night, of that story about Shelley—I think it was

Shelley—walking stark naked into a house and through a room with a dinner party in it, because he had lost his clothes out bathing."

"Well," said Robert, "from the point of view of the dinner party I can't see that it mattered whether bohemianism or asceticism prompted Shelley to do that."

Florence was so sure that he never made a joke that she failed to catch the gleam in his eye when she told him that, from the point of view of literature, it mattered a great deal.

"Maybe!" he said. "But even if Mr. Dodd does resemble Shelley in that respect, I doubt if my nieces will be any the better for his acquaintance. However, I'm taking Antonia with me, and she is our heaviest charge."

She could not help being sorry for him, foreseeing an uncongenial fortnight in Vienna. The party set off next day and were accompanied by the whole family as far as Innsbruck. The children, with misplaced cheerfulness, had taken it into their heads that this was an occasion for rejoicing; as Sebastian put it, the Sangers did not often have weddings. They insisted upon all kinds of hilarious celebrations and the day had a sort of *opéra-bouffe* atmosphere which made it particularly trying to their uncle, who saw nothing festive in this tardy removal of a blot from their scutcheon. They began by narrowly missing their train down to Erfurt, owing to a scene with Teresa and Paulina over their toilets. They had discovered a number of black garments, inexplicably left behind by Linda, and had thought that they might as well go into mourning for their father. They appeared, after every one else was ready, dressed like little widows, with skirts down to their toes and long crape veils floating from their hats. They were immensely pleased with themselves, twirling this way and that, to exhibit their draperies, but the rest of

the company did not receive them kindly. At length they were forced into other clothes and the whole party ran irritably down the hill to Weissau.

By the time that they were sitting at lunch in Innsbruck, Florence felt that the expedition had already lasted a week. Her heart sank when she contemplated all the hours of noisy junketing still before them, for they were to see the travelers into the Vienna train at two o'clock, and their own return to Erfurt was timed for six. She could not imagine how they were to spend the intervening hours; the day was scorching and the change from the upland air oppressed her. Glancing at her companions and aware of the wild effect they all produced, she wondered whether her own father would have recognized her, meeting her thus. But she need not have been alarmed. There was nothing of the traveling circus in her own appearance. She was, as always, neat and charming. Her dress was admirably chosen to stand the exposures of such a day, being plain, cool, and of a soft cream color which showed no dust. To Lewis, staring at her furtively between mouthfuls of soup, this trim freshness was a mystery. He did not trace it to her clothes, but only knew that she looked as different as possible from the Sanger girls. Tony, for all her unquestionable beauty, looked bedizened and outlandish. Her silk frock was much crushed and her hair hung down in wisps under a magnificent new hat. As for her little sisters, they might have been pulled through a hedge backward.

Once in the shelter of the station Uncle Robert was able to detach himself and register luggage in seclusion. His feelings were thus spared during the final scene, for the children no sooner saw the train which was to take their sister away than they set up a loud howl at being parted from her. Antonia also wept, but more quietly and

with a remarkable effort at self-control; she was really anxious to do right in the eyes of her cousin Florence, for whom she had conceived an ardent and humble admiration. She kissed all her family very often and promised to send them a picture post card from Vienna. She kissed Lewis and invited him to come and stay with her as soon as she had a house of her own. Finally, and with a certain shyness, she kissed Florence, murmuring:

"Dear Florence! I'm so sorry to be saying good-by to you. And I'll try to remember what you said about not swearing, only in my bedroom."

She and Jacob hung out of the train, waving gayly as it rattled out of the station, while Uncle Robert hid in their compartment, feeling for them all the bashfulness which was not included in their natures.

The rest of the party felt decidedly flat after their orgy of emotion. They straggled out into the station square and the children began to demand that they should all go to the cinema. This was, to their minds, a good finish to a joyful day, but their elders did not agree with them. Caryl, perceiving dismay in the face of Miss Churchill, tactfully proposed a separation. Lewis should show her the sights of the town while he escorted the children. They could all meet again for the six o'clock train. This idea was warmly seconded by Lewis, who relished the prospect of an afternoon alone with his lady and was impatient to begin it at once. But Florence felt a little sorry for Caryl when she thought of the probable atmosphere of the cinema and the unruly state of the children's spirits.

"That is really an excellent young man!" she commented, looking after them.

"Excellent!" said Lewis. "Where shall we go?"

She unfurled her parasol and said that she would go anywhere cool. The

day was too torrid for intelligent sight-seeing. Were there no shady gardens where they might sit? Lewis said he thought not. He said that they might have a look at some churches if she liked. He thought that a nice empty church would suit him better than a public garden, though, even if he succeeded in finding one and luring her into it, he was at a loss how to proceed. He had never imagined that any woman, especially one so kind, should be so difficult of approach. Her virtue frightened him at every turn, and he was beginning to wonder desperately if she would go away back to England, beyond his reach, before he should have plucked up the courage to make love to her.

Occupied with these reflections he walked moodily beside her while she steered herself and her parasol through all the glaring, crowded streets. But they got at last into a quieter thoroughfare, and he, seeing a promising-looking church in front of them, pointed it out to her, saying that it was, he believed, an interesting old place. She was surprised, for it looked dull.

They passed into its cool gloom and wandered about, staring at tinsel-bedecked shrines. Lewis was at last alone with Florence in the dark, silent church. He wished, in despair, that she was not so good. His methods were swift and a little arbitrary, but he had never met with any serious resistance. He looked at her doubtfully.

"I love you!" he exclaimed nervously.

She started and looked at him in grave inquiry. Then she smiled enchantingly and said:

"I'm glad to hear it. I love you."

"Oh!" he said, rather taken aback.

For the candor of this unsolicited avowal he had not been prepared. His own statement had been made as a sort of preliminary explanation, paving the way for an embrace. Her response,

though it might be called encouraging, was so unexpected as to chill him a little. But having cleared his first fence he had better go on. He took her in his arms with a roughness which testified at once to embarrassment and unschooled desires.

In the desert emptiness of her mind, whence thought and sensation had retreated like an ebbing tide, a single bleak idea stood forth, a rock till then submerged and now revealed, for a timeless instant, to the daylight. It was an understanding of his essential hardness, a knowledge that this man who held her so close was indeed no tender lover but a stranger, as cold as ice and harder than a stone. Then her true self, her generous love, returning, flooding her soul, bore down upon that frightful image and drowned it in night forever.

She heard fresh footsteps in the porch and tried to release herself, with a faint sigh of protest. He let her go. She sank upon a bench and hid her face, for a moment, in her hands.

He sat down beside her and waited for a lead. Presently she turned round and smiled at him. She had recovered her poise and her regard was clear and happy. Again he was smitten by a profound uneasiness. She was so astonishingly honest. She was like nobody else. She seemed to have no scruple in hiding what she felt, and he realized that she had been speaking the truth when she declared that she loved him. And because of that she would believe anything that he said.

"She's like a child," he thought amazedly. "She's like my poor little Tessa."

This was nonsense. He knew that she was not in the least like Teresa, save for a look in the eyes which had disarmed him. But in his mind, certain ideas were always connected with his friend, thoughts of kindness, pity, and obligation, which now came over him. This woman, because she loved,

was innocent, sincere, and defenseless, like Tessa; she was insecure, like Tessa. All he felt for Tessa seemed to stir in his heart, forcing him to an extreme compassion for Florence. He swore to himself that he would never make her unhappy, and knew in the same instant that he was bound to do so. He had already discovered that he could not leave her. He fell back upon the only solution which occurred to him, a course which he had already contemplated in some awe and dismay. He said in great haste:

"How soon can we be married?"

He would marry her and he would always be kind to her. That was the best he could do. What was she laughing at?

"I'll marry you," she said, "when-ever you like. Lewis—tell the truth!—it had only just occurred to you, didn't it?"

"Oh, no," he declared untruthfully. "But I ought to have mentioned it earlier. Florence! As soon as we possibly can."

He took her hand and kissed it. His boats were burned.

Once outside in the sunlight and traffic he could hardly make out how it had happened. The thing was absurd, unforeseen and unreasonable. But irrevocable now, and, on the whole, very pleasant. He was betrothed. Also he was very thirsty and was on the point of suggesting that they should go and have a drink somewhere when it occurred to him that she probably took tea at this hour. With a first conscious effort at adapting himself to the demands of a new life he took her to the restaurant where they had lunched and ordered coffee.

"Have some cake," he urged. "Have one of those pink cakes."

He was so nervously eager to offer her the right thing that she laughed. She was sure that he had never fed a

young lady with pink cakes before, and indeed he never had. Their coffee came, and she took off her gloves and poured it out, sitting opposite him, smiling her happy, tranquil smile at him across the table. He gave her back a glance which he felt to be very domestic and husbandlike. He felt as if he had been married already for quite a long time; as if his old, untamed existence was so long ago as to be almost legend. But a little bit of the legend was still alive, as he soon discovered, when he caught the eye of Minna Gertz, who was drinking with some students in the corner by the door. Minna was an old flame of his, the daughter of an inn-keeper at Erfurt. He nodded an amiable greeting. Florence turned round to see what he was smiling at, and looked a little surprised. He explained:

"That's Minna Gertz. Her father keeps an inn between Erfurt and Weisau. I've stayed there."

Florence bent upon Minna that serene, interested scrutiny which she accorded to every new thing, observing her predecessor as if she had been a piece of architecture or an Alpine plant.

"It's a pity they are giving up the peasant dress; it suits their build. That girl in Tyrolese dress must have looked comely, but in that hat you see all the coarseness of the peasant type without its rustic charm. But I suppose to her it's progress of a sort."

Lewis said that he supposed so. He did not feel equal to discussing Minna's progress. He was busy proving to himself that marriage with Florence would not greatly derange his life. He did not want much; he could live quite contentedly anywhere. To make certain of this he announced that they would live in England when they were married, because it was a part of the world which he had formerly avoided.

"If you like," she said. "Your—your people live in England, don't they?"

"My— Oh, yes!" he agreed, looking startled.

"In London you said?"

"Yes."

"I don't want to bother you to tell me if it's difficult. And nothing can make the slightest difference. But it's better for a wife to know, don't you think?"

"Know what?"

"What sort of people her husband belongs to. I haven't the vaguest idea about yours, Lewis, and you know all about mine."

"My family are very disagreeable."

"Yes?"

"That's all."

"What do they consist of?"

"I've a father and a sister. My father was a school inspector. Now he's a member of Parliament. And he writes books. Two a year. Little textbooks and outlines of things, for schools and workmen who want to educate themselves. Science and English literature and our empire and those things."

"Oh! Can he—is he—any relation to Sir Felix Dodd?"

"He is Sir Felix Dodd."

"W-what?"

"He is Sir Felix Dodd."

She was petrified with astonishment and could only sit gaping at him.

"Know him?" he asked pleasantly.

"My father knows him."

"I'm sorry for your father then."

She knew that Charles hated Sir Felix Dodd; he was always abusing him. They sat on many boards together, for the school inspector M. P. was a power in the educational world. Charles had dubbed him "Fulsome Felix" and avoided him as far as possible.

"Good heavens, Lewis!" she stammered, "I can't—I never—how very strange! I never knew Sir Felix had a son; at least—"

She remembered now that she had heard of a son who was a terrible

scamp, and must not be mentioned in the presence of anybody connected with the Dodds. What nonsense people talked!

"I mean I never knew his son was you."

"Why should you?"

"Oh, it's the sort of thing one ought to know. You see, I'd heard your symphony; but somehow I'd never connected——"

"It's natural. They don't boast of me, I imagine."

"But—but—I know your sister, then, by sight, anyhow. Millicent, isn't she? She was at college with me; but not my year. She sings, doesn't she? Gives ballad recitals?"

"She may. She always fancied her voice."

"And then she married—oh, who? Somebody in the foreign office—Simmel Gregory. Oh, Lewis! How extraordinary this is! I never thought——"

Lewis, for his peace of mind, did not grasp the full significance of it. It did not seem to him very important that Florence already knew all about his people. He said impatiently that he had quite lost touch with them and she wisely let the subject drop. Later on she would make him tell her what the trouble had been. And then, when they returned to England, she would smooth it all out. They must be brought to forgive him, whatever he had done.

For herself this news was a great blessing. She would not, after all, be forced to scandalize her family. She was radiant, as they set off for the station, feeling that life had been very good to her.

"I'd have married him," she thought, "if his father had been the hangman; but this does make a difference."

Charles would not be overjoyed to hear that she had selected Fulsome Felix for a father-in-law, but he would prefer him, surely, to the hangman!

They met Caryl and the children

waiting for them on the platform. Lewis, still intent upon glueing his hand to the plow, informed them cheerfully that he was going to be married. Their faces fell, and Paulina at once exclaimed:

"You won't marry Florence!"

"Yes, I shall," he said, too wise to ask why not, in case she might come out with any of the obvious objections.

"Yes, I shall, shan't I, Florence?"

"It looks like it," agreed Florence.

She flushed a little under the dismayed stares of the Sanger family. She could have wished that Lewis had not announced the engagement in such a hurry. Caryl was the first to recover, after an ominous pause. Rather faintly, he hoped they would be happy.

"But are you sure it isn't a mistake?" began Sebastian. "All right, Caryl, you needn't kick me! I wasn't going to say anything. All I mean is, don't do it in a hurry. Hadn't you better——"

"That's our train," interrupted Caryl. "Let's make a move. Come, Tessa! What's the matter with you? Have you got a stitch?"

Teresa was sitting on a bench, apparently in great pain. She was rocking up and down with both hands over her heart. When they asked what ailed her she lifted a face so blanched and drawn that she looked like a little old woman. With some difficulty she pronounced the words:

"Too—many—ices!"

"You poor little dear!" cried Florence, bending over her in concern. "Where's the pain? In your chest? Can you manage to get home, do you think?"

"No," said the rude Teresa, pushing her off. "I'll have to—die—on this bench."

"She gobbled them so," explained Sebastian. "I knew she'd be sorry after the ninth."

Between them they got her into the train and stretched her out on the seat

of a carriage. When she was thus comfortably arranged, she sighed and fainted. The train started before they could bring her to.

"She's very blue," said Florence anxiously. "It looks more like shock than anything else. But I suppose nine ices would account for it. Put the window right down, Caryl, so that the air blows in on her. Nine ices!"

"I'm very sorry," apologized Caryl. "I didn't know it was as many as that. Ike gave them money just before he went."

He had his own opinion, which was, by the way, the opinion of Paulina and Sebastian also, as to why his sister had turned blue. But the experience of a short and eventful life had taught him to hold his tongue.

CHAPTER XII.

Jacob and Antonia did not consider that Uncle Robert made a very good third upon their wedding trip. His inconvenient sense of decency threw a guilty gloom over the whole affair. He insisted that Jacob should put up at a different hotel, and he could not stomach the idea of any combined pleasure parties.

A growing partiality for his niece did nothing to mend matters. He had always been kind to her, and the pretty creature had taken it into her head to behave so charmingly to him that she was fairly irresistible. At the moment she was all for copying her cousin Florence, so that her manners in public did not shame him as much as he had feared. Her dress was neat and quiet, she drank little, laughed with circumspection, and took real pains not to talk with her mouth full. Robert was no longer tortured by the idea that she might be taken for his daughter; at the end of the fortnight he might almost have liked it. She had a way of crossing the crowded lounge of their hotel

which might have deceived an expert, it was so quietly and competently British.

Nothing occurred, however, to make him grow fonder of Jacob. On the contrary, since it was impossible for a man of Robert's mind to be lenient toward the pair of them, every passing grace exhibited by Antonia threw a blacker shade of villainy upon her lover. Social intercourse between the three was in consequence very uneasy. Robert held himself ready to escort his niece upon shopping expeditions, and even showed an inclination to visit the opera, but he did not ask Jacob to come with them. Yet, as the pair were officially betrothed, it was but reasonable that they should occasionally be allowed to meet. Antonia was, therefore, permitted to entertain her cavalier at tea in the afternoons, while her uncle went for a walk by himself—a compromise which interpreted Robert's notion of reasonable chaperonage.

"But it's stupid!" said Antonia the day before the wedding. "Why can't we all go about together and enjoy ourselves? We could have such fun."

"He cannot endure the company of a wicked man like me," said Jacob gloomily, searching his pockets for the brooch that he had bought for her that morning.

He had nothing to do in the mornings except buy gewgaws for his love, and every day he offered her something to console her for the tediousness of this interval.

"He's no business to, then," said Antonia, bridleing at any criticism of her property. "He hardly knows you!"

Jacob laughed and produced the brooch, which he pinned into her dress with a display of sentiment which would have been very distasteful to Uncle Robert. Everybody else in the hotel lounge knew at once that the pair were betrothed, and that the young Jew had brought a gift for his bride, but

Tony was not so English that she minded this.

"I do think," she said, "that he might let you come when we go buying clothes. You will have to look at them when I wear them, so I think you ought to choose them."

"And I am paying for them," he reminded her.

She did not object to his paying for them now they were to be married. Nor did she wince at his frequent references to the fact. She just took it as one of the sort of things that Jacob was liable to say, the sort of thing that so palpably upset Uncle Robert.

"Yes," she said. "But he doesn't know that."

"That is very simple of him," observed Jacob. "Who should pay for them? He knows you have not a krone of your own."

"Florence gave me some from her father. And he has no idea of the value of things. I told him I had enough to buy all the things on the list she gave me, and he swallowed it."

"Your cousin has made you a list?" asked Jacob eagerly. "That is good! She has style. Until you have more experience you cannot do better than to copy her. Later, I think, you should not dress quite so quietly. I shall take you to Paris in the autumn and have you dressed in the way I should wish. Have you the list there? Let me see it!"

"I began it," said Tony, "and then she looked it over."

She gave him the list, which began in her own childish scrawl and was finished in the neat, scholarly script of Miss Churchill. He chuckled when he saw that his bride had intended to buy "six or seven hats, one gold evening dress with a train, and shoes with red heels," but had overlooked the need for any underclothing. Florence had modified various items and added a detailed catalogue of lingerie.

"Is two dozen chemises enough?" he asked, planting a fat forefinger on the list. "When my sister married I remember hearing them speak of twelve dozen. You must have what is correct."

"She says it's enough for an English girl."

"She should know," he agreed.

And he continued to scrutinize the list, making very frank comments, until Uncle Robert wandered unhappily into the lounge, a grizzled, meager presence, exhaling that mixture of superiority and suspicion which mantles some Englishmen abroad. Antonia, prompted by some sprouting social instinct, no sooner caught sight of him than she snatched the list away from Jacob with a hasty warning in a slang which Robert could not possibly understand. But their chaperon was too much disturbed to be aware of any by-play. He even forgot to be cold and stern to Jacob. He had found awaiting him, on his return from his walk, a letter from Florence which had upset him so much that he felt compelled to go and tell somebody about it, even though it should be Birnbaum.

"Here's a pretty state of things! Florence writes that she's thinking of marrying this fellow Dodd."

"Florence!" cried Antonia.

"Dodd!" cried Jacob.

If Robert wanted to startle them, he succeeded. They both turned perfectly pale with astonishment and dismay, and sat looking at each other while he rambled on:

"I can't think what her father will say. If he's got any sense, he'll forbid it! He'll forbid it! But I suppose he'll blame me. How could I have prevented it? How could I have foreseen it? Who could have thought that Florence, *Florence*, a sensible woman like Florence, not quite a young girl either, would dream of doing such a thing. A delicate-minded, well-bred girl, to take

up with a wretched mountebank, a disagreeable, ill-conditioned young cub, with the manners of—of—well, he hasn't got any manners. And goodness knows if he ever washes."

"Oh, but he does!" interrupted Antonia, recovering speech. "I'm sure he does, Uncle Robert. I've seen him——"

"Well, he doesn't look as if he does. A shoddy bohemian! One of these bad-blooded young ruffians who defy decency and call it art! No better than a hooligan! Oh, yes, I dare say he has done some very fine work, but that's no reason why she should want to marry him. Good heavens! Isn't it enough to have had one of them in the family? Couldn't she have been warned? I should have thought the look of him would be sufficient; a sulky, impudent-looking fellow, who's probably sprung from the gutter, without a single——"

"You are mistaken, Mr. Churchill," put in Jacob. "I think that his family is very good. His father is Sir Felix Dodd. You have heard of him—yes?"

"Dodd! Dodd! Good God!" spluttered Uncle Robert.

Jacob hastily produced all the details in his possession which could cast any light upon Lewis' early career. Uncle Robert continued to call, at intervals, upon Dodd and God.

"But what on earth can they think they are doing?" asked Antonia. "They must be mad. Florence is so clever. And Lewis isn't a bit. And she's very good, too."

"But," broke in her uncle, "but, to my mind, this about his family makes it worse. Much worse! There must have been some very grave scandal before an English family would cut off——"

"I do not believe there was a scandal," said Jacob, "and I think that he cut them off. I have never heard that it was their wish. He ran away because he did not like his father. He has lived a wandering life, but I think

there has been no disgrace. I know he played the cornet once, with a circus, but——"

"Completely *déclassé*," groaned Uncle Robert. "No! I think his possessing a family makes it worse. I remember now, I did hear that old Dodd had a scamp of a son who had run away from school. A tramp! A circus band! You tell me that he had the education and opportunities of a gentleman, and threw them away to play the cornet in a circus band? Then there's nothing to be said for him, as far as I can see. I shall go out and telegraph. I shall wire to Florence that I don't approve at all. I shall entreat her father to come out and stop it."

Tea hardly pacified him. He swallowed a little and then bustled off to dispatch his telegrams. Jacob and Antonia mournfully discussed the event.

"She can't know what he is really like," said Antonia.

"It is madness," agreed Jacob. "He has cut himself off from her world because he will not endure it. Will he now return to it? Or does he think that she will share his life?"

Antonia conjectured that Florence did not know very much about his life. She remembered a conversation in which his name had been mentioned and said:

"I think she rather admires his character."

"Admires!"

"Yes. She said he was—what was it? An ascetic! What does that mean?"

"It means a man who will practice a life of austerity for the cause of some great ideal," he told her.

"O-o-oh! But——"

"You would say that this does not describe Lewis?"

"I never knew him go without anything he wanted."

"Nor I. It is true that he does not

want very much. Perhaps she admires him for that. A wild savage would want even less than he does, yet she would not marry a wild savage. In some ways Lewis is not so much to be admired as a savage."

The wedding came off next morning at an early hour. Uncle Robert departed immediately afterward, for he was in a hurry to catch a train back to Innsbruck and put an end to all this nonsense of Florence and that fellow Dodd. The wedded pair saw him go without much regret, for, unceasingly distracted by the indiscretions of his nieces, he had assumed a most aggrieved air. Throughout the ceremony he stood over Jacob like a jailer, as though he suspected him of refusing, at the last moment, to make an honest woman of Antonia. When it was over he kissed the bride with a sort of grudging melancholy and wished her happy in tones which prophesied inevitable calamity. He shook hands with the groom, averting his eyes, and popped into his taxi.

Antonia and Jacob returned at their leisure to the opulent hotel where they intended to begin their honeymoon. After the constraint of the past weeks they felt very much like children on a holiday.

"Do you know," said Jacob, as he hooked up his wife's dress that evening, "I think that I am a little grateful to your uncle. It is so interesting that I have not seen any of these lovely dresses before. No! Do not wriggle! That is quite correct, how I have done it. I shall not get you a maid just yet! We shall do very well without one, for a little, *nicht wahr?*"

"I'd be frightened of a maid," she said quickly.

But he said, with some firmness, that she must have one, to keep her clothes in order. She wore black lace, which was a little old for her; in her desire to look like Florence she did not consider that sixteen should not dress like

twenty-eight. But the gown gave her height and dignity, and Jacob felt very proud indeed as he followed her into the restaurant, and saw how men at other tables turned to gape enviously at her slender, delicate beauty.

It was, perhaps, from her mother that she inherited her capacity for looking aristocratic. He had never felt more strongly this sense of having married his superior. She sat opposite him, gravely and slowly eating her dinner and looking so stately that he did not dare to press her foot under the table. Yet this was the barefooted gypsy who had conquered his heart in Genoa; the swaggering, brazen little creature whose ragged clothes had so greatly discomposed him in the Munich streets. She was, in these days, rather silent, and often he would have liked to know what was in her mind. He could never guess. He sat and watched her now, a little miserable for all his possessive pride, as she sipped her wine, thoughtfully, and with downcast eyes. The long lashes on her cheek, the soft curve of her neck, her white fingers, drumming on the table, with his ring shining upon one of them, all were like tiny stabs. His love could show him these, but he had no clew to her prisoned thoughts. If he asked her, she would say lightly that she was thinking of nothing at all. Or she would expound to him a long train of amazing childish reflections. Only one thing he knew: she did not think of him as persistently, or as unhappily, as he thought of her.

After dinner they went to the opera, there being nothing else to do. He could have wished that it had not been "Otello," which they had heard in Munich. Echoes of their first disastrous adventure continually haunted him. But Tony seemed to have forgotten all about it, and enjoyed herself with energy. He must remember, bearing the burden of it for both of them, how he had sat beside her,

savagely counting the slow minutes, while on the stage an appalling drama of conquering hate swung on to its dire climax. He became so gloomy that she asked him, at last, if he was worried about anything. He assured her, instantly, that he was the happiest man in the world.

And he was. At times he was almost bewildered by his own bliss in being there, with Tony, so terribly dear, beside him; really his own for the rest of his life. It was not her fault if the insatiable sorrows of an unequal love tormented him, the hungry demand for more, for a fuller return, for a feeling which it was not in her nature to give. As she leaned forward, absorbed in the passions staged beneath her, he felt suddenly that their box contained just himself and a wraith, a ghost; as if the real Antonia, whom he loved, was an imagined woman living only in his sad fancy.

She saw that he was troubled. She took his hand and held it, glancing at him sometimes with an exquisite, gentle compassion which mitigated that solitude of spirit which she could not share. In the last entr'acte she said:

"What will Tessa and Lewis do, if he marries Florence?"

"Tessa?"

"Yes. She loves him."

"I never knew that."

"Didn't you? Just think."

He thought and decided that she was quite right. In the light of his own trouble he was very sorry for Teresa, robbed thus of her friend by the lady from England. He said so.

"Florence hasn't taken him away," said Tony decidedly. "Nobody could do that."

"But, Tony, this must be the end of it, Lewis and Tessa. It will part them."

"Never, while they live. But Florence will be rather a complication. Listen!"

The lights went down and the first

bars of the "Willow Song," a plaintive murmur of warning, stole out into the dark house. Antonia sank back into a dream. Jacob, still inattentive to the fate of Desdemona, reflected throughout the last act upon the encounter of this strange three: Lewis, Tessa, and Florence, their wild history still before them, their tragedy still unplayed. It seemed to him possible that they might never meet. So many perils threatened this crazy marriage and any of them might wreck it.

He sighed deeply, being in the mood to be sorry for everybody. His sigh was echoed by Tony, since the tragic loading was over. The Moor, dying, had in his arms the fair woman he had destroyed—was taking his last sad kisses. The curtain, slow and silent like an approaching fate, slid down over the love, the mad despair, and the whispered cry: "*Un bacio—e un altro bacio!*" Violins swung through their final poignant arpeggios, and the lights went up. Jacob said:

"I give it a year."

Antonia, pale, rapturous, and blinking, had to be reminded; she was still contemplating a mock deathbed.

"Florence and Lewis?" she said. "Do you think as long as that?"

The night was fine and they walked home. She was still dreamy and excited, and at every crossing she shook his nerves by a total disregard of the traffic. The Sangers were like that, he remembered; they always did their best to get themselves run over after a concert. Himself, he never suffered in that way, even though, at the performance, he might have shed tears of delight.

When they got to their hotel she went straight up to bed, but he paused to get a drink. There was, in the vestibule, a flower stall and he bought a handful of roses, stiffly wired into a bouquet, before proceeding to the oppressive gorgeousness of their bridal suite. The lift was lined with looking-

glass, so that as he shot upward he got an endlessly reduplicated vision of himself, stout and nervous, a light cloak flung over his shoulder and white flowers in his hand: an infinitely long row of gentlemen carrying offerings to an unforgiving past.

CHAPTER XIII.

Charles annoyed Robert by talking as though the worst part of the business was the bond which Florence had forcibly established between himself and Fulsome Felix.

"Now I shall never be able to get rid of that fellow and his confounded cordiality," he complained. "My son-in-law, by your account, is an unprepossessing rascal. But Florence, not I, will have to suffer for that. As is perfectly proper. I could have endured him very well if he had been the son of another father. As it is, my daughter's marriage will be the cause, I can foresee, of great personal inconvenience to me."

Which Robert thought very flippant. Privately he regarded himself as the chief victim in the affair, for Florence and Lewis, having got themselves married with all possible speed, stayed behind in the Tyrol and left to him the appalling task of escorting the three children back to England.

The whole family had urged Charles to go out in person and forbid the banns. But he, knowing his daughter, refused to give himself so much useless trouble. He sent a few remonstrative telegrams, so wise and so witty that she quite disliked having to tear them up. And, for a long time, he unobtrusively held himself in readiness to rush off and fetch her home at an hour's notice, should she summon him. But no message came. During the first month of her married life she wrote every week to say how happy she was; then, for a time, her letters came almost daily and

he interviewed the idea of going to her without waiting for any direct appeal. But in the autumn she seemed to settle down. She wrote less often and more tranquilly. Lewis, it seemed, was at work again on that concerto which Sanger's death had interrupted. They had migrated to a little fishing village on the Mediterranean where he could be quiet and finish his work in peace. Later, they were to return to England, move into the house which Florence had bought, and launch themselves upon musical society in London.

This house now filled up all her letters to her father. It was at Strand-on-the-Green, and had belonged to one of her many school friends. She had always thought it the most delightful house in the world, and, hearing that it was for sale, she wired to Charles to secure it for her. He bought it about three weeks after her marriage. She was quite sure that it would exactly accommodate herself and Lewis. It was easily accessible, and yet sufficiently out of urban distractions. When their position was quite assured they might live right out in the country, and people should come and stay with them, but at present it was advisable to be near the scene of action. It was a very old house, with a romantic history dating back to Charles II. and a walled garden with a mulberry tree. In this garden a large studio had been built, connected with the house by a covered passage; this was to be the music room, where Lewis was to exist, beautifully undisturbed. Also there was a long, lovely chamber on the first floor, looking out over the river, which was to be the drawing-room.

Florence knew every hole and cranny of the building and had already furnished it completely in her mind's eye. For this occupation she had plenty of leisure, for Lewis left her alone a great deal. He was working with as much ease and regularity as he had ever

achieved in his life. Marriage seemed to have restored his scattered wits. He had recovered completely from the shock of Sanger's death, was able to sleep soundly at night, and could think of nothing but his concerto. Florence was delighted. This work was as important in her eyes as it could be in his, nor did she feel herself neglected, for he was perfectly affectionate when his mind came, as it were, to the surface. She liked solitude and the company of her own thoughts; at this time she almost craved for it, feeling a need to consolidate and preserve that separate and individual outlook on life which even a wife should have, and which often grew shadowy in their unreal, happy hours together.

Sometimes he would leave his work and they would wander over the terraced hills at the back of the little town; he idly enjoying himself—she attempting continually to build up a solid foundation of understanding between them. She could have wished that he would be a little more interested in the house.

"Do you really not care what sort of place you live in?" she asked him once.

"I like this place," he replied, "as well as any."

They were sitting on the stone parapet of a vineyard, high up on the hills, a low wall covered with mosses and small flowers.

She picked a sprig of thyme off the wall, rubbed it between her fingers, and sniffed at it as she reverted to the house.

"Moving in will be simple," she told him, "for I know exactly what I want, down to the last window curtain."

"Can you always get what you want?" he asked in some amazement.

"Oh, yes! It's simply a matter of being firm. In the drawing-room I want the brightest color to be those luster jugs I told you about. The permanent decorations ought to be subdued, because the light—Lewis! Stop throw-

ing stones! I don't believe you've listened to a single word I've been saying!"

"Yes, I have. You were talking about jugs. I'm listening. I'm listening to you and a dozen other things as well."

"There aren't a dozen other things. There's only the chapel bell, and some men shouting in the boats down on the quay—and a dog barking, and some ducks in the garden below."

"Not bad! You've missed about fifty larks in the sky, and the grasshoppers all round us, and a car changing gear on the hill, and the oars in the rowlocks of that boat putting out, and the children playing, and the goat bells away on the hill behind us, and I think I can hear a smithy."

"What a babel it sounds! I'd have said it was a quiet evening."

"So it is. It's so quiet that you can hear every sound in it. Generally there's too much noise for that. But come along, my girl! Put on your hat! The sun is setting and one of these short nights we have here is about to begin."

In the streets of the town it was already getting dusk. They went carefully through smells and refuse, down the steep hill and under massive archways, to their little inn just above the quay. In the dark of their room they found letters from England awaiting them, glimmering whitely on the dressing table. Lewis took his out onto the balcony where the last gleams of daylight lingered. He had a fat envelope with two letters inside it and he laughed aloud as he scanned the first:

DEAR LEWIS: Will you please come and take us away from here? It is a disgusting school and we have endured it as long as we are able. Really and truly we've tried to put up with it, because Tessa said one ought to give everything a fair trial, but it doesn't and we can't. It isn't like what you said it would be. We would never have come if we had known what it would be like. We shall kill

ourselves if we are not soon taken away; we cannot exist here; it is insufferable. The Girls are hateful; they say we don't wash and are liars. The governesses are a Queer Lot and not fitted to be teachers, I'm sure. They think of nothing but games. Why should we have to play games if we don't like? Would you like it? Work is sensible, we don't mind that. It was your fault that we were persuaded to come, so you will be a murderer if you don't take us away before we end our miserable Lives. When Florence wrote to say we must stay because it's good for us our hearts broke and all the house rang with our frantic lamentations. Could you come and take us out to tea? They'd let you if you said you were married to her. And then we could all go to the Station and take some train that goes a long way off. We have nobody to help us only you, and as the poet says: On some fond Breast the parting soul relies! Do, do, do come, DEAR Lewis. You will not be sorry when you hear our joyful ejaculations. Your Sincerely friend,

PAULINA ELOISE SANGER.

P. S. Probably we shall hang ourselves.

P. S. Tessa says I'm to say she won't. She says that I can if I like, but she won't on any account because it is a Mug's Game. But it's not as bad for her as she doesn't have to play this hellish hockey because she has a valvular lesion. They found it at the medical inspection, so she has to go for walks. I forgot to say we hope you're having a nice time and like being married. Tony does. She is coming to England this winter. She sent us a picture postcard that the Girls said was common. Caryl did too. He is playing in a cinema.

When Lewis had finished reading this letter he swung round to call in through the window to Florence that the girls were unhappy at school and must be removed. Then he remembered that Paulina had said something about Florence having written. It was the first he had heard of it! Queer! He looked at the letter again and saw that the envelope contained another from Teresa. He began to read:

Lina threatens to write, so I think I'd better take up my pen too, that I may warn you not to pay too much attention to her. I don't think she will kill herself, she is not nearly brave enough. Reflect upon her character and consider if I am right! You need not worry

to come and take us away if it's inconvenient to you, since no fatal consequences will befall.

But I must confess that we don't find ourselves very comfortably situated in this school. We don't mean to stay for another term. But I think we can endure it till Christmas. There are a lot of people here who I think you would laugh to see. I do often. But it's really a waste of time for us to be here. We would learn more in some other place where they didn't play games perhaps.

I can't write very well, because I'm frantic, because a girl called Mary Marlowe is in this room playing *Jardins sous la pluie* FFFFF! This isn't her fault, because no person is allowed to play anything properly in this school. If they do, Miss Somers says: "What are you putting in the expression for? You can't put in the expression till I've told you what to put." In the room next door another girl called Naomi Hooper is playing the "Society Pathétique." She is putting in the expression, and I wish to Heaven that she wouldn't. The noise is filthy and infernal.

They hate us, and we hate them. When we come in, they all stop talking and whisper. We don't ever get away from them. A person has to be alone sometimes, but truly the only place where you can be alone here is the lavatory, which is not very comfortable, and they come rattling at the door if you stay there too long. We go there when we cannot conceal our tears. Our chief business is to be always running as there is some place, on a time table, that we must be in *every minute of the day*, and these places are often far apart, and no allowance is made for transit. I know now why you ran from your school.

With kind regards,

YOUR VERY DEAR TESSA.

It had grown so dark before Lewis had finished reading that he could scarcely decipher the last words. When he had done, he stood for a moment with a perfectly blank mind, staring out to sea. This unstudied letter had brought her so forcibly to his imagination that she might almost have stood beside him. She had breathed a hasty confidence into his ear, a caressing farewell, called herself his very dear Tessa—and she was! God knew how dear—and then, suddenly, she was quite gone, vanished into the shadows.

He leaned over the balcony and looked fixedly into the odd, ill-kept little

garden beneath, as though amid its tangled thickets and the blackness of its cypresses he might catch the whisk of her petticoats. But he saw nothing and heard nothing save the sea whispering on the beach. And he became aware that the gathering night was inexpressibly melancholy—empty. He was desolate because of the vast, aching sorrow of the water, pale as mother-of-pearl, smooth as glass, where a few black boats still hovered. On the horizon purple clouds collected slowly, and from the stumpy tower at the end of the quay a yellow path of light came to him across the dim expanses of the sea. It was all sad. In the whole of this cool, limpid evening there was nothing of her and he had been bereft, robbed. Her letter, crushed in his hand, was a dead thing, powerless to charm her back. Florence called, in a clear low voice, from the room behind him.

"Did you speak, Lewis?"

He thought that he must have exclaimed. Perhaps he had called on his friend, a little imploringly, in the darkness.

"No," he said confusedly. "No."

And he went back into the room.

His lady wife sat in front of the dressing table, where two tall wax candles burned on either side of the looking-glass. She was brushing her hair with soft, rhythmical movements and did not at once turn round. All that he could see was a fine dark cascade of hair, touched at the edges to a golden haze by the candlelight. It hid her face and shoulders. Presently she glanced at him and asked in surprise if he had seen a ghost. He said that he had not. But his look of blank discovery did not immediately disappear. The dressing table was all covered with little boxes and bottles and brushes and her rings, winking in the candlelight. She took them off, when she did her hair, all except her wedding ring, which shone, bland and smooth, on her left hand.

He looked at it, and at her, as though he saw them for the first time. She was so solid, so inevitably established there, that she seemed to defy the memory of the little wraith on the balcony.

"I've had a letter——" he began.

"So have I," said his wife. "From your sister."

"Millicent?" His brow grew dark. "Again?"

"Again! Then you did get it?"

"Get what?"

"Her first letter. She says she wrote in June, when she saw our marriage in the paper. But as she got no answer she fears it never reached you."

"Yes, it reached me. I tore it up."

"Why?"

"I don't want to have anything to do with her."

"I don't think that is very reasonable. Her letter to me is very friendly. She wants us to come and see her when we are in England. Read it."

He took the note, disgustedly, and read it through.

"She's up to no good," he commented.

"But I can't quite see what she's after. What does she get by this sudden friendliness?"

"Couldn't it be genuine good nature?"

"No, it couldn't. She never had an ounce of it in her life. But why can't she leave us alone?"

He simply could not understand these advances. He had married Florence without ever formulating to himself any clear idea as to her social position; at first he had thought of her as Tessa's cousin, and, later, as the object of his own desires, but never as a Churchill and the daughter of the Master of St. Merryn's. In his simplicity he supposed that she was not grand enough to be an asset to anybody. She talked a great deal about her friends, but they all had names unknown to him, and he did not realize that Millicent might have found them impressive.

Florence herself had vague suspicions of the truth, but, in her anxiety to be reconciled with Lewis' family, she preferred to ignore them. Already she had managed to forget that at college she had avoided an intimacy with Millicent Dodd with very considerable difficulty. She said firmly that she should answer the letter, and his expression, on hearing this, goaded her to carry the battle a step further.

"I think you should have told me when first she wrote. One acquires an interest in relatives when one marries."

"Is that so?" he took her up quickly. "You don't tell me when Tessa and Lina write to you."

"My dear Lewis! That's a perfectly different case."

"How is it different?"

"Teresa and Paulina," she said with a flush, "write very silly letters which, for their own sakes, I should be sorry to show to anybody."

"I'll engage they write better letters than Millicent. You can get the truth out of them, at least."

"Not always, I'm afraid. The world in general finds that they—shall we say?—exaggerate a little."

He stated his opinion of the world in general rather forcibly, in terms which she had never heard used before. She asked, in some bewilderment, what he meant. Then she grew angry.

"There is no need to be so violent," she said.

"Why have you sent them to such a—such a——"

"What!" she cried, enlightened. "Have they written to you? Little monkeys! May I see?"

Smiling, yet a little displeased, she held out a hand for the letters, and, after a brief hesitation, he gave her Paulina's. She laughed, quite kindly, as she read it.

"Poor darlings! It's rather hard, I do admit. But they must learn to put up with it. They must become civilized

beings, you know, if they are to live in a civilized world. And this process, though painful, is probably as quick as any."

"Why should they live in a civilized world, as you call it?"

"Don't be unreasonable. You know as well as I do that an uncivilized world is no place for them. Think of Tony!"

He found this unanswerable. Thinking of Tony, he had formerly given them advice which he now regretted. It was true that he had himself encouraged them to go to Cleeve. Florence was demanding to see Teresa's letter in a determined way.

"Oh, well," he mumbled, withholding it, "it says the same thing."

"I'd like to see it, please."

He gave it up. She frowned over it, but gave it back quite safely with the comment:

"Not quite so artless, I'm afraid. Paulina is at least sincere, don't you think?"

"So is Tessa sincere."

"Not altogether. She pretends to be writing to tell you not to come. Why does she write at all then? She knows she's no business to do it. I'm sure that Paulina never thought that she oughtn't. But Teresa has some feeling in the back of her mind that she wants to hide."

"Has she?" asked Lewis, beginning to reread the letter with interest. "I don't think Tessa could hide anything."

"I think," she suggested, "that I wouldn't answer them if I were you. Or just send them a cheery picture post card."

"I shall do no such thing," he exclaimed, angrily aware of a hint of coercion in her manner. "I shall write and advise them to run away if they don't like it."

"Don't be absurd! I must ask you not to do anything so silly. I've taken the responsibility for those girls and I'm sure my father would agree with

me. They oughtn't to be encouraged to feel sorry for themselves."

"I can't help what you and your father think. I knew Tessa and Lina before you did."

"Still, they can't be so much to you that you would deliberately go against me in this matter? Because, you know, I shall feel it strongly, very strongly indeed, if you insist upon writing to them after what I've said."

Something in the gentle decision of her tones had a dreadful effect on his temper. They were both very angry, for behind the dispute lay deeper issues than they cared to admit. Teresa aroused in him a devotion, and in her a dislike, which neither fully realized. At last, with a furious exclamation, he seized his hat and flung out of the room, slamming the door behind him. It was their first quarrel.

For a few minutes she was quite dazed. Then she smiled and murmured to herself:

"Dear me! What a hullabaloo!"

And soon afterward she said firmly: "He'll have got over it when he comes in."

She finished brushing her hair and sat still, thinking. It was really time that she took stock of herself and her position. This explosion was significant of a sort of uncertainty, a hesitation of mind, which had grown on her in the past weeks. She must think; she must think about herself and Lewis. Only that was difficult when he had so completely mastered her imagination. Always he was in her mind, but not rationally; the idea of him had grown so large that it blotted out everything else. Before they married she remembered that she used to think about him a great deal. She had seen him clearly though mistakenly. Since then he had changed into quite another person and she saw him clearly no more.

As she slowly dressed for supper she told herself that, for both their sakes,

she must recover some measure of poise and detachment. She must get rid of this pliant languor which had in some ways made their relations so easy, but which was a bad foundation for rational partnership. A determination seized her to get back to England as soon as possible. In England she would be reinforced by her own background.

She waited for him and, as he did not come, she went down and ate her supper alone. Then she came up and sat for a long time on the balcony listening to the sea. Quite late, when she was thinking of going to bed, she heard him come in, and called to him. He came out at once and stood beside her, leaning on the edge of the balcony. In the pale starlight he looked strange, wild, almost exhausted, but she did not think that he was still angry. He put a hand on her shoulder and asked in a low voice:

"Well? What have you been doing?"

"Listening to the sea," she said.

He listened, too, for a few seconds. Then he shivered and exclaimed almost in a whisper:

"It's cold. Come in!"

"I'm not cold. Have you caught a chill?"

"I hate this balcony!"

Still grasping her shoulder he leaned forward and looked down into the garden. An owl hooted in the thickets and he jerked back, his nervous, clever fingers tightening their clutch. For all those hours he had been thinking of Tessa, away in England, shut up, beating her untamed little spirit against prison bars. Soon he was going to England himself, near to her. A conviction that he had better not came upon him so strongly that he exclaimed aloud:

"Don't let's go!"

"Go where? What do you mean?"

"England. Let's stay here. We'd better not go."

"My dearest boy! I've bought the house!"

"Couldn't you get rid of it?"

"Lewis! You're moonstruck! It's quite impossible!"

"Oh, very well!" he yielded with an odd, defensive gesture. "It's your doing. Come in! Come to bed."

She did not reopen the question of the children's letters since that might sound like nagging. So she left it, almost sure that he would not write. And in this confidence she was justified. Perhaps he forgot, or perhaps he did not know what to say; but Teresa and Paulina awaited his answer in vain, shedding many salt tears, night and day, in their bitter exile at Cleeve.

CHAPTER XIV.

The music room was the most important of all the rooms in the new house. Here Florence put a beautiful piano and a good writing desk and comfortable chairs and a waste-paper basket which Lewis never used. Then she turned him loose into it, with an assurance that it should be entirely his own, and that nobody should ever clean it. For this he was not properly grateful, having forgotten the ways of housemaids.

"Clean it?" he said. "I should hope not! Roberto never cleans anything."

Good little Roberto had attached himself to Florence and Lewis when Sanger's circus was broken up. During the honeymoon he had gone on a holiday to see his relations, and then he came to England to do the housework at Strand-on-the-Green. He was, so Florence said, more useful than three maids put together and much pleasanter to deal with. He did all the work, with the help of a charwoman who came in the mornings.

"He's exactly the kind of servant I've always wanted," said Florence. "Really

feudal. He gives the right tone to the house."

"The right tone?" said Lewis in a puzzled voice. "Scaramello? I don't quite see what you mean, but he looks very fine now you've cleaned him up."

"He's the sort of servant we ought to have. He goes so well with the sort of effect I want to produce."

"Why should you want to produce any sort of effect?"

"One does produce a definite impression on people, whether or not one makes any conscious efforts about it, so one might as well take pains, and think a little. I want this house to look like us—pleasantly bohemian—a sort of civilized Sanger's circus, don't you know, with all its charm and not quite so much—disorder."

Lewis looked very doubtful.

"I don't see how you're going to do it, Mrs. Dodd, and anyhow it's a queer ambition for a respectable married woman."

"You think of nothing but respectability these days."

"I dare say," he said lightly. "I'm a reformed rake."

And he fled to his music room, leaving her to do what she liked with the rest of the house.

The Birnbaums had taken, for the winter, a large furnished house in Lexham Gardens. Lewis went to see them as soon as they arrived and sat with them for a long time, smoking Jacob's cigars and exchanging gossip of the Sanger world in which this young pair had been cutting a great figure. Antonia was most anxious to know how he did with Florence.

"Very well," he told her. "She's a model wife."

"Have you quarreled yet about anything?"

"Oh, no. I'm so firm, you see."

They laughed at this and asked what he was firm about.

"Well, there's the little question of

my family. She's strangely anxious that we shall all be brought together, and since we came home she's struck up a sort of friendship with my sister. Ever met my sister, Ike?"

"I have not had that pleasure, I'm afraid."

"Well, that's natural, for she's your social superior; a knight's daughter and married to a baronet's heir. But you needn't regret it, for she's as ugly as sin. Toothy, you know, and pop-eyed. And a tongue like a horse radish, as Florence will discover before she's much older. Anyhow, over that I've been firm. I won't have her in the house. If I receive her, I don't know what lengths they might go. It might be my father next!"

"Your father! Does he clamor to be received?"

"Well, not exactly," confessed Lewis. "But Florence has seen him, and she tells me that I'm in danger of his free forgiveness if only I'll apologize for my language last time we met. So you see the ice is thin!"

"What occurred when you last met?" asked Jacob, who had always been curious to know. "Did he oppose your musical career?"

"Oppose it!" cried Lewis. "I wish he had! No, it was his encouragement that drove me into being a prodigal."

"I see. He knew too much about it? That happens sometimes."

"He knows too much about everything. He had to, I suppose, being a school inspector. But I didn't object as long as he left my department alone. I could put up with his bloody little textbooks and what his dear friend, the archbishop, said to him coming out of the club, as long as he didn't interfere with me. When he did, I had to go away."

"He has written your pieces for you?" asked Jacob with a grin.

"I declare I wouldn't put it past him! But he didn't get as far as that. I made

my protest when he had the amazing impudence to purloin a thing of mine and show it to Simon, for his opinion, apparently! Simon!"

"Simon! You mean Lucius Simon?"

"But certainly! There's only one of him, I should hope."

"One is too many," said Jacob gloomily.

Thus they dismissed a man who was still the most renowned of British composers. In their circles, however, Lucius Simon was hardly considered worth a malediction. He was, perhaps, the wrong age.

"Simon," Lewis explained, "was one of my father's friends. Bound to be! An obscene, loathsome, complacent, self-advertising maggot if ever there was one! Just the sort of fellow my father would take to. Plenty of them at our house; and all so hearty and gentlemanly, don't you know, all busy building Jerusalem in England's green and pleasant land, and doing well out of it. No, don't laugh, Tony! You think that's Ike's job? I tell you, you've no idea what these people are like. I hadn't noticed the thing was gone from my room—it wasn't much of a thing, you know, only boy's work—till the old man sent for me one evening, and there, in the library, I found Simon puffing at his cigar and digesting his dinner. I nearly vomited at the sight of him. And then I saw my manuscript in his pudgy paws, and my father said: 'I've sent your little sonata to Mr. Simon, Lewis—he was mister then—to see if he could make anything of it for you. You'll find his suggestions very helpful.' Simon! And they handed it back to me with his filthy scrawls all over it, as if they were giving me a thousand pounds! And Simon said I had some powers and a gift for melody. Simon!"

"So you have," said Jacob. "But you are afraid of it. Before I have always wondered why that is. Now I know

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that it is Simon. You were foolish, Lewis. He could have done so much for you. I suppose you insulted him?"

"Of course he had influence. My father knows nobody who hasn't. No! I kept my temper remarkably well. I merely threw the thing into the fire and walked out of the room."

"Just quite quietly, like that," explained Tony, and Lewis had to laugh, remembering how he had stalked off, with all the fiery, outraged vanity of art and youth combined, and slammed the door upon two flabbergasted gentlemen.

"Next day," he said, "I spoke my mind. I'd been wanting to do that for seven years. Then I ran away."

"And that is the story of your life," murmured Jacob. "I have often wondered. Your wife—does she know?"

Lewis reflected and said that he did not think so.

"If she knew, she would tell you, as I do, to be wise and forget it. Now he is willing to forgive you. Why?"

"Oh, because I've married so well. I never realized, you know, that he'd be so pleased. If I'd known—oh, well, I'd have done just the same, I suppose. But it riles me to think how he's probably going round telling everybody that he always knew I would sow my wild oats and settle down. But he shan't set foot in my house, unless it's over my corpse."

"I thought it was Florence's house," said Tony, puzzled.

"Oh, well, it is really. But I'm master in it."

"What is it like? Is it as nice as this?"

"Oh, well——" He looked round at the disordered magnificence of the room where they sat: "No, it's not as grand as this."

"Can I come and see it? Shall I come to-morrow?"

"No, don't come to-morrow. Come some time when she's at home. She's gone away to Cambridge, to her father."

"Gone back to her father! But not for always?"

"Oh, no! Only for a week-end. We've not parted."

Antonia, who still could not believe that Florence and Lewis were really happy together, looked dubious. She said:

"Tell me when she comes back and I'll go and see her. And she must come and see me. Do you like this house? Jacob took it. It belongs to a friend of his; he collected all these Gainsboroughs. But I don't like having a house. It's a bother. You can be just as comfortable in your own suite in a hotel. But we thought we'd better because I'm going to have a baby in the spring. Did you know?" asked Antonia.

"That's excellent news. I congratulate you, Tony."

"You'd better congratulate Jacob."

"I congratulate you, Ike."

"Have a cocktail!" said Jacob expansively.

"He says," murmured Antonia, "that a boy with my brains and his money may get anywhere."

"My cherished one! I said your father's brains."

"Yes. But that's not tactful. Myself, I feel I might have a daughter with Sanger's disposition and Jacob's appearance."

"These," said Lewis, "are morbid fears natural to your condition. You must get rid of them. I'm drinking his health!"

Until dusk he lingered with them, enjoying the stuffy comfort of the room, with its rich, heavy hangings and soft carpet and chairs like little feather beds. He told them about his new concerto and offered to send it to them. But they, who preferred listening to reading, made him play some of it to them. Their approval seemed to please him very much.

"Florence thinks it a great advance

on the 'Revolutionary Songs,' " he told them.

He added, seeing that they were amazed at this quotation of an alien opinion:

"She's very interested in music, you know. Really she seems to have heard a lot."

"*Du lieber Gott!*" exclaimed Jacob, when Lewis had left them. "Tony! What is to become of that poor fellow? When did one hear Sanger quote the opinion of any of his women?"

"My mother was musical," said Antonia thoughtfully.

"Musical!"

Jacob again called upon the God of the Patriarchs to witness the accusedness of ladies who were musical. It was a pity that Florence could not hear him.

"Your father," he said, "made a mistake when he married your mother. He was caught as Lewis is now caught; his appetites were stronger than his common sense. But he broke through all that; he had so much brutality. Lewis will not treat this woman as Sanger treated your mother. He is not brutal."

"Isn't he? He's insanely cruel sometimes."

"Cruel? Yes! That is a different thing. Clever people are cruel. Stupid people are brutal."

"Sanger wasn't stupid."

"He was not clever. His strength was that; it made him so different! And, for a man of genius, little heart, he was wonderfully insensitive."

"And I can't see that Florence has done Lewis any harm. It's lovely, this concerto he has written."

"It is good, yes!" mused Jacob. "Something has happened to him in this year. 'Breakfast with the Borgias' was the beginning. We thought that was a joke, but it was a sign. Always, before that, he had a—how would you call it?—a *gêne*—a constraint—almost a terror, of his own power to write melody.

He could do it, and he would not. It seemed sad to me, for those who could do that have been so few—not half a dozen."

"Sanger stopped him."

"I know. It was a pity, your father's influence. While he was your father's disciple he would never obey his own nature. He was a *révolté* and Sanger's was the music of revolt. Now he is becoming free of all that."

"Well! Florence isn't stopping him."

"Nothing will stop him. I think that he should have a hearing in this country. Sanger will soon be popular. Then also the early work of Lewis. The 'Symphony in Three Keys!' This year we will have that, and next year the new concerto."

"You will see about it?" cried Tony.

"I will think of it. This concerto is good, but until now I had never thought of his future. He has fought himself."

"He's a good conductor. Better than Sanger was."

"That is so," agreed Jacob. "I will see him some time and ask him if he would like a concert."

Antonia looked very pleased, for if Jacob said that anybody should have a concert, they generally had one. And a year ago she was sure that he would never have thought of risking money on Lewis. She planned to tell Florence all about it.

Lewis jogged home, through the wintry twilight, on the top of an omnibus. He was feeling rather lugubrious, for he expected his house to be chilly. The boards were too bare and the furniture too hard and sparse; there was none of the fat comfort and untidiness that make for warmth. When Florence was there, of course, it was different. She made a sort of glow in it. But she had fallen out with him and was gone to sulk at Cambridge. That was the truth, though he had been so light-hearted about it at Lexham Gardens. She had asked Millicent and her

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husband to dine with them, and he, when told of it, had demanded that the invitation should be canceled. They had come to terrible grief. Florence said that there were some things which nobody could do; he had replied that there was nothing that he could not do, and that he would write Millicent himself if she did not. Also that his letter, if written, would probably be the ruder of the two. She had commanded and implored him. She had said that it was very humiliating for her, and that she would not submit to it. She had frozen him for three days and then, finding it, as he suspected, difficult to keep up, went off to Cambridge.

Meanwhile the innocent wretch had left him alone, with no better chaperon than Roberto, in a neat, cold house which always smelt of furniture polish, cheered by the bleak hope that on Monday a neat, cold wife might return to him. He wished that he could have stayed all night with the Birnbaums. He wanted company and distraction, for he had practically finished his concerto and there was nothing in his head; a dangerous time, when, formerly, he would have gone to stay with the Sangers.

The omnibus came to Kew Bridge and he got off. He whistled as he hastened down to the river and picked his way along the narrow path, in front of the little quiet houses.

He opened the small iron gate in front of his house, and started backward with a cry as three people rose up from the deep shadow of the portico above. They had been sitting in silence on his doorstep.

"It's Lewis!" breathed a voice, and he was nearly throttled by a small pair of arms, flung round his neck, and half-a-dozen frantic kisses.

"How—who—why! Paulina!" he stammered. "Sebastian! How did you get here?"

"We've run away," said Paulina.

"We had to. Sebastian ran away from his school, so we thought we'd better, too."

"We found your house all shut up," continued Sebastian more calmly. "So we sat on the doorstep and waited for somebody to come."

Lewis looked up at the third person on the step above him. She hovered, a little uncertainly, in the shadow.

"Tessa!" he said eagerly. "Is that Tessa?"

Then she came down to him and he caught her up and turned her face to the last of the daylight, to make sure that he had got her. He heard her laugh and say:

"Yes, it's me! I've come to lay my bones among you."

"Oh, Tessa! This is splendid! How long it's been!"

Yet she hardly seemed real. She was so pale, like a shadow, and in his arms she seemed to have no weight at all; she had alighted there as some fragile, snowy flower might drift down to the grass of an orchard upon a windless night in May.

"Look up!" he commanded. "Lift your head up, Tess, and kiss me!"

She tilted her face up and they kissed, a clinging embrace that was more like a farewell than a greeting. To her that instant brought a pang, a dim echo of times past; to him, an apprehension of change, a foreshadowing of loss and grief to come. They drew quickly apart and she said:

"Are you going to let us into your house, Lewis?"

He pulled a latchkey from his pocket and, unlocking the door, he lifted her up and brought her into the hall. The others followed and the door shut with a clap which resounded through the empty rooms. He stood still in the darkness for a moment, reflecting, asking himself what sort of parting they had had, six months ago. Strange that he could remember nothing of it! He

supposed that it was some time in June, somewhere in the Tyrol, but it seemed that he had let her go without a thought, robbed, surely of his wits, by some foolish preoccupation. Then he remembered that he had been getting married. He switched on the light and saw her again, close beside him, young and round-faced, blinking a little in the sudden brilliance.

Two telegrams lay on the hall table. They had arrived during the afternoon and Roberto had put them carefully into view before going out. Lewis opened them. The first said:

Sanger sisters disappeared this morning last seen 9 a. m. are they with you will inform police unless hear from you have also wired Cambridge Wragge.

The next, which was from Florence, said:

Wire received here saying Sebastian has run away if he turns up at the Green keep him and wire me.

These telegrams Lewis read out, and Teresa commented:

"Sanger sisters sounds like a music hall turn."

"Well," said Lewis, determined to be practical and efficient, "we must wire to Florence, and all these schools, to say that you are safe. Come into the music room."

They were much impressed by the music room, and Sebastian immediately began to play the piano while Lewis concocted the telegrams which he was to send. The girls, sitting on either arm of his chair, made suggestions and alterations. The finished product to Florence ran:

All children here have wired schools don't bother to come back your loving husband.

In the messages to the schools they were anxious to be as abusive as possible, but Lewis, with some remnants of prudence, insisted upon censorship. Eventually they compromised with a brief intimation of Sebastian's where-

abouts, in the case of his school, and, to Cleeve, the message:

Sanger sisters safe they are not coming back to your school Dodd.

"Because we can't possibly go back," insisted Paulina. "We bore it in silence——"

"No," said Teresa sadly, "not in silence."

"I did," said Sebastian. "Nobody has ever heard a word of complaint from me."

"What made you run?" asked Lewis. "They said I was to be in the school choir!" Sebastian told them, with calm indignation.

And he began to play a Beethoven Sonata, opus III, very solemnly, as if its shocked sevenths gave point to his feeling of outrage. Soon he was making a considerable noise, and the girls, screaming over the din, gave an account of the elopement. Sebastian had objected to many things at his preparatory. He did not get enough time to practice, he had an inadequate piano with three notes broken, and an instructress who knew nothing about it. His life there was clearly a waste of time and this business of the choir had been the last straw. He had taken advantage of a half holiday and a paper chase to slip off and get to the station. Here he caught a train which went to a cathedral town not ten miles from Cleeve, where his sisters were; so he thought he might as well pay them a visit before going on his travels. He pawned his coat and cap, bought others, had a meal, and went on to Cleeve, feeling that he had covered his tracks very successfully. Late in the evening he presented himself boldly at Farnborough Lodge, the college boarding house where Teresa and Paulina were incarcerated, and asked to see them. He told the lady who interviewed him a very plausible tale of an uncle who had brought him to Cleeve and who was coming next day in person to take the girls out. She

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never thought of disbelieving him, for it is not usual to suspect such small creatures of so much villainy. She summoned the girls and left the three together. He, finding them unhappy, persuaded them to run away, too. Then he left them and spent a very uncomfortable night in the garden of an empty house, fearing the questions that might be asked if he took a room anywhere. Next day the girls put all their money in their pockets and hid themselves in a dressing room until the whole of the college was assembled in the great hall for morning prayers. Then they put on their hats and walked out of the building, knowing that their absence would not be discovered until the house assembled for lunch at one o'clock. It would be presumed, in the classes where they should have been, that they were absent through illness.

Sebastian met them at the railway station, whither they got themselves in some trepidation, and they took the next train to London. Having found their way to Strand-on-the-Green, they had spent the rest of the time sitting on the doorstep.

"If we'd known how simple it would be," said Paulina, "we'd have done it long ago. Only we didn't know where to run. Why didn't you answer our letters, Lewis?"

Lewis looked uncomfortable and said he had forgotten.

"Tessa said you wouldn't answer."

"Did you, Tessa? Why?"

"Because you have a forgetful nature."

"No, I haven't."

"Yes, you have."

"I think I heard Roberto come in. Listen!"

"Roberto!" they cried. "Is he here?"

And they rushed out to embrace Roberto. In the kitchen there was little trace of Florence. All was a lovely

confusion. Roberto could not make a pudding without using every bowl in the house, and never washed a dish until all were dirty. A grand washing up took place every two or three days, and one was evidently almost due, for dirty crockery was piled high on the chairs and tables and even on the floor. Tomatoes, spilling out of a paper bag, splashed the room with color, onions hung in strings from the ceiling, and the whole place smelt gloriously of garlic.

"Oh!" cried Teresa, with her arms round Roberto's neck, "this is like getting home!"

Lewis pitched a ham off a chair by the fire and sat down. He pulled Paulina onto his knee and began to fill his pipe.

"We'll have our supper in here," he said. "It's warmer."

"It certainly is the place for us," said Teresa.

CHAPTER XV.

Two letters had come for Florence by the early post next morning. Paulina picked them up from the mat under the letter box in the hall and brought them to Lewis, who was eating his breakfast in the kitchen.

"They've both got the Cleeve postmark," she said, "and one is from Miss Wragge. I expect she will explain how she came to mislay us. Do open it and see what she says."

"That I can't do," said Lewis. "It belongs to Florence. She wouldn't like it."

"Couldn't you steam it open?" she suggested. "Then you could shut it up again and she won't know. We do so want to hear what's in it; and she won't tell us perhaps."

"These things," said Lewis grandly, "are not done."

"He talks like a book, so he does," commented Teresa.

"And he's quite right," said Sebas-

tian. "She wouldn't do it to his letters."

"I can't think who this is from," said Paulina, peering at the other envelope. "It's typewritten, I think."

Teresa turned quite pale and got up to look at it, too. She suggested that it might be from Miss Butterfield.

"Oh, Tessa! Do you think so?"

Paulina also looked frightened and Lewis asked who Miss Butterfield might be. They told him solemnly that she was the head mistress.

"Then what is Miss Wragge?"

"Only the house mistress. There are twelve of them, you know; one to each house, and one for the day girls. But Miss Butterfield is the head of the whole college. She lives in a house by herself. They must have told her about us."

"Well, naturally, my good girls! Two pupils couldn't very well disappear without her hearing something of it. Marmalade, Sebastian? What was this lady like, that you blanch at her very name? Did she birch you?"

"No-o! Oh, no!"

"Did any one birch you?"

They shook their heads.

"What did they do to you when you were naughty?"

They seemed at a loss to explain, but they intimated that it had been something awful. It was not so much what was done as what was said.

"I know what it was," put in Sebastian wisely. "They said, 'Naughty girl, Sanger! Don't do it again!' And you cried for the rest of the day. That's the way they do at girls' schools."

Teresa and Paulina looked very indignant, but they had to admit that it was something a little like that. Sebastian exchanged a glance with Lewis, a grin of amused contempt at women and their ways. Lewis said:

"But go on about Miss Butterfield. Was she old?"

"Not particularly," said Teresa.

"She was called Miss Helen Butterfield, M. A. And she used to read prayers in the morning in a black cloak, with a queer blue thing round her neck. And she had a most beautiful voice; quite different from Miss Wragge, who used to read prayers at the house in the evening and sort of barked them. And she saw people—bishops and parents and people—and she saw the girls if anybody had died, or if they'd done anything perfectly dreadful. And she used to give addresses to us on Fortitude and Friendship and things like that. She was very nice looking, and had lovely clothes. She very nearly knew our names." This was said in a tone of modest pride.

Lewis gaped at this recital and said at last:

"Do you know, I think it was high time you came away. I don't quite like the sound of Miss Helen Butterfield."

"Oh, but she was wonderful!" insisted Teresa. "Really she was. Everybody thought so. I'm sure, whatever happened to her, she would always know exactly how to behave."

"Tessa didn't hate it all nearly as much as I did," Paulina explained.

"Didn't you, Tessa?" asked Lewis jealously. "Why not?"

"Oh, it was interesting in a way. It was new."

"Still, you ran away. You came here."

"Yes, because the others did. I barred being left there by myself. I didn't like it well enough for that. Look, Lewis! We haven't seen your house yet. You've got some more rooms, I suppose, besides what we've seen?"

"Oh, yes," said Lewis. "I'll show you the whole concern."

He took them first to the dining room, which was washed white, with an oak cottage dresser and blue plates. There was a gate-legged table, polished almost black, with a luster dish on it full of

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golden oranges. The chimney piece was bare save for a Russian ornament of brilliant enamels which blazed through the somber-tinted room. Lewis mentioned that Florence wished her house to look like the Karindehütte; an idea which puzzled the children very much. They thought this a poor, bare sort of room, not worthy of their lady cousin. Paulina asked hopefully if the pewter flagons on the sideboard were silver.

"Imitation," Lewis told her sadly.

"Oh, well," she consoled him. "They look almost real. You might never know."

They came into the hall, where drawings by Florence's friend, Mr. Argony, hung on the yellow walls. Lewis was humming a little tune which somebody, his mother most likely, had taught him before he was out of petticoats. It had just come into his head:

"There was a lady loved a swine,
'Honey I' says she.

"Come upstairs, girls! Our best things are in the parlor.

"'Pig hog,' she said, 'wilt thou be mine?'
'Hunks!' said he."

They went up to the drawing-room, which was a worse shock than ever. Teresa made an effort and said:

"Well, I think it's nice. You wouldn't expect Florence to have a lot of heavy sofas. Has Tony got one, Lewis?"

"But still, she's married," objected Paulina. "Married ladies always have sofas. Has Tony got one, Lewis?"

"'Hunks!' said he. Tony? Oh, she has half a dozen."

"What did I say? Ike knows. I don't call that a sofa."

She pointed scornfully to a divan in the window, piled high with beautiful cushions.

"But it's pretty, Lina," insisted Teresa.

"A drawing-room," said Sebastian, "doesn't want to be pretty. It ought to be rich and grand."

The young Sangers had but a small experience of drawing-rooms. But their general notion of respectability implied a good deal of upholstered mahogany, ormolu, and many small tables with mats and albums. They approved, however, of their cousin's bedroom, to which they were next conducted. It was a fine, orderly place, full of her plain, beautiful personal belongings. It was like no lady's room that they could ever have imagined. No powder was ever spilt on the looking-glass, no petticoats hung on the door, no stays were flung over chair backs. The chests and wardrobes smelt faintly of lavender. Pauline looked at the twin beds, side by side, with blue-linen covers worked all over in patterns of flowers and leaves in bright wools. She asked in some awe:

"Does she let you sleep in here?"

Lewis nodded. He still found it a little surprising himself, and woke up of a morning feeling that he must have got there by mistake. A burst of music took him, and he broke into the second stanza of his nursery rhyme:

"'I'll build for thee a silver sty,
'Honey I' says she."

"Where do you keep your clothes?" asked Teresa, peeping into a wardrobe.

"Oh, they aren't here. They're in my dressing room."

"I call that unsociable," said Paulina. "When you're washing and dressing, that's just the time you want somebody to talk to. Is she cross when she wakes up in the morning, Lewis?"

Lewis considered, staring at her bed. He could not remember, somehow, what she was really like. He was never very good at imagining people when they were not there, and just now his mind was confused between two Florences, and the astounding reflection that he was married to both. He had begun to show the house in a spirit of marked rebellion against the domineering

stranger who owned it; but the comments and conversation of the children, their very different conception of their cousin, brought him back to an earlier idea of her. He remembered her suddenly as the beautiful, kindly, rather defenseless creature that she had been when last they were all together. There was certainly a pathetic quality about her then, which had affected him very powerfully. But since they came to England it had all melted away like snow in the sunshine.

All the morning he was musical and inclined to exclaim "Hunks!" at intervals. Also he learned, in the course of the day, many details of the girls' life at school which amazed and perplexed him. They had, it seemed, gone there with every intention to be good, prepared for inhumanly strict teachers and a great deal of hard work. They were really anxious to be educated and might have done well if the place had not been utterly beyond the scope of their imagination.

Cleeve College was very large and very modern. It had been built up, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, by a famous pioneer in women's education, a hard-bitten lady who apparently believed that a uniform and most desirable type can be produced by keeping eight hundred girls perpetually upon the run. The young creatures, under her rule, were kept most wonderfully busy, and in their subsequent careers they did her credit. Her traditions hung heavy upon Cleeve long after her departure.

The staff were not at all strict; for the most part they were lively young women, fresh from the university, with a strong faith in hockey and the prefectorial system. The earnestness which the Sangers brought to their school work won them little favor in that quarter, as long as their manners remained so casual and their laziness upon the playing field so unconcealed. But,

as was natural, their failings brought them into collision with the other girls rather than with authority. They would have suffered in any school; but at Cleeve, which was admittedly democratic, their personal habits and their ready mendacity made them the butt of every amateur reformer. The business of baiting them had a moral sanction behind it. They were persecuted for their own good and the honor of their school until they scarcely knew if they could call their souls their own. They could discover no smaller loophole of respite or escape; in class, at games, at bed and board the tyrannical, many-eyed mob were always with them.

Paulina, describing it, was impetuous and violent. Teresa was sardonic, and as often inclined to laugh at herself as at the school. She perceived a certain humor in some of the situations that had arisen, and she persisted in saying that she would have stayed there a little longer if Sebastian had not turned up. Lewis did not like this. He wanted her to say that she had run because she could not help it. He was not at all satisfied with her this morning. Undeniably they had succeeded in changing her at that horrible place. In six months she had grown out of all knowledge; she was sturdier and rather clumsy sometimes; there was a new, thoughtful hardening about her eyes and mouth. Perhaps it was her neat, well-made school clothes that made her look so odd. He had never seen her respectably dressed before. And what was this horrid fair braid that slapped her back whenever she moved her head? He had to pull the ribbon off and burn it on the kitchen fire. But even when her hair hung loose on her shoulders it looked sleek and heavy, not like the wind-blown locks he used to twist and play with.

They were at tea, toasting muffins in the music room, when Florence returned, cold, tired, anxious, and very

much put out. She had received their telegram that morning and had hastened back immediately. Her first impression, as the party round the fire rose to greet her, was that she was an intruder. The children flung themselves upon her with every appearance of joy, but, for the fraction of a second, she knew that their faces had fallen. She tried to be stern and displeased, and said coldly as she got away from them:

"Well, children! What is the meaning of this?"

Lewis was waiting rather shyly until they had done with her, and she, conscious of their inquisitive eyes, went and kissed him on the cheek, exclaiming: "Well, Lewis!" in almost exactly the same tone. But, as if bent upon disconcerting her, he responded, with a cordial hug which dissipated all her airs of distant dignity. She exclaimed, flustered and at random:

"Oh, I am so tired!"

They were pulling up a chair to the fire for her; and Teresa was taking off her furs, and Paulina was bringing her a cup of tea, and Sebastian was toasting a muffin for her. Lewis, with quick, deft fingers, was pulling the long pins out of her hat. Then, somehow, he had banished the noisy trio from the room and she was alone with him in the dusk and the quiet firelight. She leaned back in her chair, quite exhausted.

"I sent them to the kitchen," he said. "You're tired. You don't want to be worried with them. Have some tea!"

When she was fed and rested he brought her the two letters from Cleve, which were full of explanations and proposed plans of action. He told her that he had wired to both schools. "That was sensible of you, dear boy!"

She gave him an approving look, and he came and sat on the arm of her chair, saying affectionately:

"You needn't have hurried back like this, you know."

"Oh, I had to. They must go back on Monday."

"Go back! Florence! Are you going to make them go back?"

"Of course I am."

"Is it worth while? It's almost the Christmas holidays."

"They mustn't be allowed to think this sort of thing pays."

"I never thought you'd make them go back," he said slowly. "In fact, we said in the telegrams that they wouldn't come back."

"You said—— What on earth made you say that?"

She sat up indignantly.

"But you won't make them stay another term, surely?"

"I shall indeed."

"They'll only do it again."

"That's nonsense. They'll learn the folly of such escapades. If we give in this time——"

"They were miserable."

"It was their own fault."

"It was not. This Cleve! A filthy place by all accounts. They were right not to stand it."

"My dear Lewis! It's the best school in England. I was educated there myself. I know all about it."

He had nothing to say to this. So he pleaded:

"At least don't make Tessa go back. It's different for Lina."

"Lina has been loudest in her complaints."

"I know. But it's done most harm to Tessa. She was very nearly perfect before she went there."

"*Tessa was very nearly perfect!* Lewis, what do you mean?"

"She's too old for that kind of school."

"Old! She's ridiculously young for her age. Are you out of your senses? She isn't sixteen. And she needs badly to find her own level. What sort of school do you recommend?"

"How should I know? Some place

where they won't change her. A quiet sort of place."

"Cleeve turns out a splendid type."

"Oh!"

He became too much exasperated even to swear. He flung down the length of the room and back again while Florence repeated in unquestionable amazement:

"But to say that Teresa—Teresa!—is nearly perfect!"

"Was."

An obscure relief stole over her. She lay back in her chair again and continued in calmer tones:

"She's getting to the awkward age. They'll both do that. Of course, they'll lose some of their charm; they are bound to become duller for a time. English schoolgirls are not interesting. But on the whole it's best. They were very insecure, poor darlings—so childish—so impressionable!"

"Yes! Yes! That's it. Florence, I do entreat you not to send them back!"

"I must. I think it best for them, and so does my father. If we think that, there's no choice about it."

He collected himself for a final appeal.

"Have you written to Millicent yet—about that dinner?"

"No. Not yet."

"Couldn't you—couldn't we come to some agreement?"

"I'm quite ready for a compromise. You know that."

"I know. Well, listen! I'll give in about it; you ask her and I'll be civil. But won't you—"

"Won't I—"

"Keep them here a bit—the children?"

"I'd like to, but I couldn't. It wouldn't be fair to make their future a bargain for my own convenience. I really think that they ought immediately to go back. It's not caprice."

"Very well. I've made you a fair offer."

She was much tempted to agree, for she did not like the idea of forcing the children back. But her conscience forbade it. On Monday morning, however, she got from both schools a definite refusal to receive the young Sangers again. Their impertinent, unruly ways endangered discipline, and their strange oaths were likely to become the scandal of many respectable homes during the Christmas holidays. Their elopements had been sensational and a bad precedent; the authorities considered that they had better be forgotten as soon as possible. It was clear that they must remain in Chiswick until new establishments could be found willing to take them, and under these circumstances Florence had no scruple in making a bargain. She would keep them till Easter if Lewis would be polite to Millicent sometimes. He agreed, and endured the dinner party with surprisingly good grace.

CHAPTER XVI.

Florence was not long in discovering that the Sangers in London were more formidable than the Sangers in the Tyrol. In their house she had never felt so much of a stranger among them as she did now in her own; they seemed to have become, as a family, so much more corporate and definite. Christmas was scarcely over before she began to be aware that she had imported, not three friendless orphans, but an alien community, foreign and inimical to her way of life. She began to be very eager to get rid of them.

Of the three she liked Sebastian the best because his manners were always so charming. And he was talented; of that there was no doubt. After listening to some of his performances on the music-room piano she fully admitted his right to take his own career very seriously. She talked to him about it and was amazed at the calm certainty

of his ideas. Pending some permanent settlement he agreed quite cheerfully to attend a small day school in the neighborhood, for the benefit of his general education.

She wished that she could be as certain of her own future. She had, as yet, done nothing to attract the public attention to Lewis.

Early in February she made up her mind that she must give a party; not a large affair, but very choice. As the first move, it had great strategic importance.

To her first party she meant to invite only people whom she knew rather well, and these were to be chosen upon two grounds: music and influence. Also they were all to be nice people who could enjoy each other's company. The whole thing was to be intimate and very pleasant. But she was a little troubled, because she thought that Millicent should be invited and she feared the effect upon Lewis.

"I don't want to offend her," she said. "She carries a good deal of weight in some quarters. It wouldn't be at all difficult for her to put a spoke in your wheel."

"I haven't got a wheel."

"She has contrived to get her opinion respected upon musical matters. I can't think why. I don't like her voice."

"A filthy rat squeak!"

"Still, I'd like to ask her."

"Then do! It's only for once."

"And I'm asking the Mainwarings—my cousins, you know. They're quite harmless. He's in the City, but he knows a lot about music. She's very nice. And then, if he'll come, I want to get Sir Bartlemy Pugh."

Sir Bartlemy Pugh had written a quantity of church music and some choral pieces in a melodious, old-fashioned style which Lewis heartily despised. He made some strong remarks about it, but showed no other objection

to the proposed invitation. Florence said serenely:

"You never heard any of it, dear. He's a charming old man. I've known him since I was that high. Then Doctor Dawson. He's another old friend I'd like to have."

Distinguished old men who had rocked her cradle were to be very much to the fore at these early parties. She used all her pretty ways to induce them to come. Doctor Dawson, who was a fine conductor but a terrible bear, said when she tackled him:

"Don't make eyes at me, Florence Dodd! I'm coming because I want to meet your husband."

Whereat she almost kissed him.

Lewis was quite pleased at the sound of his name, but looked less agreeable when she said that she wanted the Leyburns. He demanded to know who they were.

"Oh, you know! She's a very fine singer. She used to be the wife of Jimmy Jansen, but it didn't work. They run the Guild of Beauty—she and Edward Leyburn, I mean."

"What is the Guild of Beauty?" he asked unpromisingly.

"Those people who give those concerts down in the slums. You must know! They have quite a good choir; and they practically run the 'Nine Muses.' Their idea is to educate the popular taste in the arts, beginning with the proletariat. He's done a lot of splendid work bringing music to the people."

"What's he want to do that for?"

"My dear Lewis! Why do you write music?"

"God knows!"

"Don't you want to give pleasure to people?"

"No."

"That's a pose."

"It's not! I'll swear it's not. I tell you this, Florence. The sight of a lot of them listening to my work, or San-

ger's work, or anything decent, makes me sick. I swear then I won't write another note, if that's what it's for. Sanger, too! I know how he felt. Once I remember they made a demonstration round the door of a hall when he came out, shaking hands with him and so forth, and an old fellow came up and said: 'Mr. Sanger, I'd like to tell you of the pleasure that you've given to a poor workingman.' 'Oh?' said Sanger 'I suppose you think I ought to want to please every—— who can pay for a sixpenny ticket.'"

He paused to laugh at this retort, but Florence was not amused. She said, rather angrily:

"That was abominable, and not at all funny. Not a bit. It's a thing I can't understand in you, Lewis, the way you repeat the perfectly disgusting things that Sanger said as if they were good stories."

"They are good stories."

"It was particularly odious to say that to a poor man."

"He'd have said it, just the same, to a grand duke. I wish it had been my father that he said it to. No, but you miss the point. That's how Sanger felt about pleasing people. And I think I feel in much the same way."

"It's quite the wrong attitude. I hope you won't say that sort of thing to the people at my party."

"Write down beforehand what I have to say and I'll learn it off."

She was reassured a little by his manner of saying this. To reward him she asked if there was any guest he wanted.

"Yes," he said. "I'd like to ask Ike and Tony."

"Ike and Tony?" She was very doubtful. "Do you think they would enjoy it?"

"Tony loves any sort of party. And Ike would enjoy moving in such high circles. I want him to meet Millicent. He might give a check to the Guild of Beauty."

Florence shuddered.

"You know," she said, "I'd love to have them. But at this particular party they might feel just a trifle out of it. Every one who is coming knows every one else rather well."

"Then I shall feel out of it, and so will the children. It would be nice for us to have the Birnbaums to consort with."

Florence explained that the children were not to be there and they wrangled over this for several minutes. At length they compromised; he would ask Jacob without Antonia, and later on he would give a party himself for the Birnbaums and the children. Florence was most cordial over this idea.

"I'll have Nils Stavgröd," said Lewis. "He's coming next week for a season here."

"You know him?" cried Florence. "Of course we'll have him. Why didn't you suggest him before?"

"I didn't mean your party, I meant mine."

"Ask him to both."

"I doubt if he'd like yours. He wouldn't get on with Millicent. It isn't his line."

"There's no privilege in meeting Teresa and Paulina."

"He's met them. He knows them. He's like me and prefers them, I expect."

"You're very arrogant."

He said nothing.

"And small minded."

"Yes," he said complacently.

Exasperation almost choked her. For a few minutes she could say nothing; she sat still, wondering dumbly how much longer she was going to put up with their crazy ways. Not any longer, it seemed, for as soon as she had got her breath she heard herself proclaiming instructively:

"Your attitude is completely wrong. You put the wrong things first. Music,

all art—what is it for? What is its justification? After all——”

“It’s not for anything. It has no justification. It——”

“It’s only part of the supreme art, the business of living beautifully. You can’t put it on a pedestal above decency and humanity and civilization, as your precious Sanger seems to have done. Human life is more important.”

“I know. You want to use it like electric light. You buy a new saucepan for your kitchen and a new picture for your silver sty. I’ve seen it. My father’s cultured. He——”

“It’s a much-abused word, and one is shy of using it. But it means an important thing, which we can’t do without.”

“Can’t we? I can! By God I can! Why do you suppose I ran away? To get free of it. Why do you think I loved Sanger?”

He broke into a wild tirade against the people who would chain him and his labor to the chariot wheels of a social structure. He tried to urge his own conviction that beauty and danger are inseparable; that ideas are best conceived in a world of violence; that any civilization must of necessity end by quenching the riotous flame of art for the sake of civic order. But he could not say what he meant. He was not furnished with any of the right words for such a discussion, and used, moreover, so many inexcusably wrong ones that she lost the thread in her indignation.

“I can’t stand this obscene language any more,” she said, jumping up. “And I’m sure the world would be an unspeakably awful place if you could have your way in it.”

“If you had yours, the only people who would enjoy themselves would be sick persons and young children.”

“Well, why not? Lewis! I will not have it. Is it impossible to you to dis-

cuss anything without swearing? Very well, then! We’d better let it drop!”

After preliminaries like these it was scarcely surprising, even to Florence, that the party was a failure. Jacob Birnbaum, reporting on it to his wife, said:

“Lewis is a fool! He does not take his opportunities.”

“Was it very grand?” asked Antonia, who had stayed awake on purpose to hear all about it.

She supposed that she had not been invited because she was not grand enough. In many ways she was a very humble creature in spite of a pearl rope and fifty pairs of silk stockings.

“No,” said Jacob. “The women were *comme il faut*, but they had no style. You in your chemise are worth all of them together. You are not invited because Mrs. Dodd is growing tired of the Sangers. She does not think that you are altogether a credit. Also, Lewis is not to be a second Albert, even though she is a little like Evelyn, you understand?”

“I don’t think I do. I think she’s fond of us. But how is Lewis a fool? Was he drunk?”

“Not so much. But he is throwing away all his good chances. These people might help him. He has insulted every one of them, I think, but old Doctor Dawson. There was this man there, Leyburn, who manages the ‘Nine Muses,’ does he not? He will produce ‘Prester John’ there, and Lewis shall conduct it. But Lewis! He would do nothing but abuse the piece!”

“Well, but it’s very bad. Sanger was ashamed of it himself. He was very young when he wrote it. At home we thought it a joke. It was howled down in Paris, and quite right, too.”

“Still, it is foolish of Lewis. If his own work is to be heard later, he should be glad to take these chances. And his wife is so very anxious, poor woman! I think she has arranged this party just

for that. I wonder what she is saying to him now. There will be a terrible scene going on!"

But Jacob was wrong. Though the evening was an unmistakable disaster it led to no immediate quarrel.

Florence had known all day that she would not be able to control her husband; she was quite certain of it when, with a heavy heart, she went to dress. To encourage herself she put on a very beautiful new gown; and she needed all the spirit she could muster, for he was impossible from the first. Not that he succeeded in discomposing the guests, who were, for the most part, too well mannered, and too fond of Florence, to show offense, even if they took it. But he forced her to be terribly ashamed of him. He interrupted Sir Bartlemy, contradicted Edward Leyburn, professed the blindest ignorance of any music save Albert Sanger's and his own, and played Millicent's accompaniments in such a manner that she was unable to get through a single song. Millicent was outraged past forgiveness and would not sing again, even when Edward Leyburn offered to play for her. Mrs. Leyburn, kind soul, filled the awkward gap by singing herself, though she had an audibly bad cold. Lewis listened for about ten bars and then left the room with a good deal of ostentatious noisiness, inviting the other men to come with him and have a drink. Jacob and Doctor Dawson followed him, and they seemed to be going to stay in the dining room for the rest of the night. At last Sir Bartlemy went, too, and by some unknown persuasions brought them back, but the evening, by then, was past retrieving. Everybody, in spite of themselves, looked glum. Florence could not suppose that there was any charm about her house and she trembled to think of the tale which Millicent might make of it all.

Her failure crushed her so much that she was not even angry. To-morrow,

after a night's sleep, if she could get it, she might recover enough spirit to scold Lewis. Just now she only wanted to crawl away into the dark and cry a little. Even the music unmanned her, for it brought to her mind the spring and the Tyrol and all the little flowers that she had picked with her lover, as they wandered over the mountains. And she remembered her happy, confident schemes for their life together; and the first days of her marriage when she had forgotten schemes and plans and lost herself, for a time, in the delight of being with him. At last she turned to look at him, wondering if he, too, would remember. She found his eyes upon her, strange, bright, questioning; a glance which she could not interpret.

She glanced at the clock and saw that it was twenty minutes past eleven. She had instructed Roberto to beat up some eggs at a quarter past that she might make zabaglione, a dish at which she excelled. As quietly as possible she slipped out of the room and into the pantry, where he had put a tray with the Marsala, the powdered almonds and the little glass cups in which the confection was to be served. Just for a moment, giving way to the exhaustion of disappointment, she sank down on a chair and leaned her head against the pantry dresser. She was thankful for the dark and quiet.

She felt shattered; as though she could scarcely face the brightness of the kitchen.

"But taking in the zabaglione will make it easier," she said to herself. "They won't know what it is, and I can tell them about it. It's something new, anyhow!"

She heard herself saying brightly:

"It's only Marsala and beaten eggs, cooked ever so little, just to set it."

She thought that Roberto had come in from the kitchen and was turning to tell him that she was ready when she felt herself lifted up from her chair

and caught close in the arms of her lover.

"Lewis!" she whispered. "You oughtn't to be here! Go back there and look after them."

"That's all right. They're busy singing. I've come to help you with the zabaglione."

But he seemed in no hurry to let her make it and she murmured in expostulation:

"Roberto is in the kitchen."

Lewis stretched out a hand behind him and shut the kitchen door.

"But we can't make zabaglione in the dark."

"We'll go in a minute. Why be in such a hurry? You were sitting doing nothing when I came in. Tell me!"

She was lost again. When he was like this, he could do what he pleased with her. She sighed.

"Those songs!" she said. "They made me think of the Tyrol. Did they remind you of those times?"

"Yes."

"Somehow—since then— Oh, my dear Lewis! What has come over you?"

"Don't you know?"

"Oh, well—I suppose I do. But you're so—sudden."

"You're so beautiful," he muttered.

"Florence, I wish all these people would go away."

"They'll go soon," she said soothingly. "But we must go back to them now. This is no time for dalliance. You're tearing my frock!"

"I'll get you another," he said grandly, forgetting that he had not a penny of his own in the world.

"That won't make me presentable at this immediate moment. Come along!"

And she slipped into the kitchen, where Roberto was looking quite pale and spent with beating the eggs for such a long time.

And so her ill-starred party did not

end, as Jacob had supposed, in a scene. But it marked an epoch. From that day a subtle change came over the house at Strand-on-the-Green. This was in time perceived by all its inmates. But the first to feel it was Roberto, who had not, up till then, found himself entirely at ease in his new quarters. He discovered that they were suddenly becoming more homelike. In this clean, strange, frigid house, he recognized an atmosphere which he could not have defined but to which he was well accustomed. It spread rapidly from his cozy kitchen to the rooms occupied by his employers.

He first noticed a change on the morning after the party when he took to Mrs. Dodd her early cup of tea. Usually she would answer his knock or she would wake up when he put the tray on the little table beside her bed. While he drew up the blinds she would address herself with energy to the business of rousing her companion. Upon this morning, however, she continued to sleep, after the blinds were up and with the newly risen sun shining right into the room. Their slumber was so profound that discreet little Roberto paused and peered at them anxiously and saw that madame's lovely hair, generally braided back at night into a thick rope, was loose and flung all across the pillow in a dark cloud about the still paleness of her face. Roberto, who admired madame above all women, approved of this; he peeped at her with appreciation and with that strange, wordless pity which a sleeping person will awake in an observer, the compassion of a guarded spirit for helplessness. He stole out and stumbled over something on the floor; it was the new dress, flung down as not even a petticoat should have been flung. Roberto, lately converted to neatness, was shocked. He picked up the gown and spread it over a chair; next he rescued a silk shirt. Then, realizing that the

unaccountable disorder which had overtaken the room was something significant and past his mending, he smiled broadly and slid out on tiptoe. Down in the kitchen, as he fried the bacon, he sang Puccini and Verdi with a joyous heart.

Nor was his peace of mind shattered when, a week later, he was aware of a dispute, a quarrel so formidable that the house literally rang with it. This, too, was quite in order. He listened respectfully through the bedroom keyhole to two voices, a shrill voice and a surly voice, and he said to the children with many winks and nods:

"Lewis and madame—dey fight, I t'ink—yes!"

To Florence, however, this quarrel was another step in the slow process of defeat. It was devastating to her, this sudden discovery that her temper could be ungovernable. For a few days she had abandoned herself to the reassurance of being loved, stifling her fears, doubts, and regrets in that brief oblivion which was becoming for her, as it was for Lewis, a means of escape.

Nothing had been done to reconcile their divergent points of view; the issues were merely shelved, for neither was really prepared to yield to the other. And when a dispute broke out it was somehow the more bitter because of their recent intense preoccupation with each other.

Always they seemed to fight about such foolish things. This time it was the old, wretched question of Teresa's future. Lewis was determined that the child should not go to school again.

"If Teresa leaves this house," he vowed, "I leave it. She's the only thing that makes life tolerable. So I warn you!"

And he rushed out of the room and fell over Roberto, who was listening at the keyhole, so that the sound of cursing seemed to go on all across the landing and down the stairs. The absurdity of his last remark soon restored Florence to her normal serenity, but for a few minutes after he had gone she felt herself transported by a resentment so passionate that it seemed as if she had never been angry before.

TO BE CONCLUDED.



A GENTLEMAN makes no noise; a lady is serene.—*Ralph Waldo Emerson.*



BEAUTY is divided in a thousand different ways. The most proper object to sustain it is a woman. When she has intellect she enlivens it and sets it off marvelously.—*Pascal.*



THERE is a quality in certain people which is above all advice, exposure, or correction. Only let a man or woman have dullness sufficient, and they need bow to no extant authority. A dullard recognizes no betters; a dullard can't see that he is in the wrong.—*William Makepeace Thackeray.*



WHO in these degenerate days would hesitate between an ode and an omelette, a sonnet and a salmis? Yet the position is not entirely Philistine; cooking is an art; are not its principles the subject of South Kensington lectures, and does not the Royal Academy give a banquet once a year?—*Oscar Wilde.*

by Michael Sadleir

Author of:

*A Mother's
Comedy.*



Bread Upon The Waters

I WAS at school with Blanche Radnor and, as we shared a room for two years, I came to know her very intimately. The friendship was kept up, for the Radnors lived not far from us in Somerset, and, as it happened, when we moved to town we took a flat in the next street to their London house. Blanche's most marked characteristic as a young girl was a clumsy but lovable recklessness which, considering the possibilities, led her less often into serious trouble than might have been expected. But it wrecked her happiness in the end.

As you can imagine, our leisure at school was devoted to successive crazes. One term we were athletic, another literary or theatrical, a third political, a fourth devoted to some trick of speech, clothing, or coiffure. There came a day when one of the older girls obtained from a sailor brother the appliances for tattooing. While the majority contented themselves with a small initial

or flower or decorative cipher on the shoulder or near the ankle, Blanche treated herself to a large five-point star high up on the front of her round, white thigh. She was very proud of the monstrosity, talked of it to all her friends, and would show it to me every night as we got ready for bed.

"You are an idiot, Blanche!" I said on one occasion. "In three years' time you'll give anything to be free of it."

"Oh, he won't mind!" she giggled.

After leaving school I went to Brussels for a year, and learned the news of Blanche's engagement to Kenneth Murdoch as though I were an acquaintance and not an intimate—second-hand, that is to say, in a letter from a mutual friend. When I reached home again and saw Blanche, I pressed for the details due from a fiancée to a girl contemporary. The engagement had by then lasted six months, and, though I was prepared for a rapture more sedate

than that of the first breathless days, I was not prepared to be met with embarrassed vagueness. I drew in my congratulatory horns and discreetly awaited enlightenment. To my amazement, I discovered that the girl was so infatuated that she could hardly talk of her lover, that his own scowling reticence had subdued her exuberant chatter to a kind of strangled whisper.

Kenneth Murdoch did not appeal to me. He was an engineer, engrossed in his work, climbing steadily to wealth from the narrow groove of a good but impoverished family. He was forceful, certainly, and I found no difficulty in believing him professionally brilliant: but his harsh cynicism suggested self-will and, ultimately, cruelty. Blanche would follow him with adoring eyes as he moved about a room, would droop on his arm as they walked together. It was rather sad to see her shining vitality become the mirror of another's egoism.

It was not long before I learned of the disapproval of Blanche's parents. They belonged to the backwoods squirearchy, were conventional and, under the amiable obtuseness of their manners, arrogant and exclusive. They disliked Murdoch's aggressiveness and distrusted his brilliance. One day Blanche came to me in consternation. Her father had declared that the engagement must continue for another two years, or he would withdraw the very provisional consent hitherto given. On the other hand, Murdoch had an important contract in Australia, was due to sail in three weeks, and had decided that he wished her to go with him.

The poor girl wept over the conflicting choice. Murdoch had appropriated her will power, but he could not breathe into her defiance of her parents. Also, she was their child and inherited something of their stay-at-home complacency. She disliked the thought of Australia, and shrank from the sort of folk among whom her first year of marriage would

be spent. For all her absorption in her lover, she was not blind to his background, and her simple vision of a comfortable life in London, where she could allot her husband's work hours to his friends, his leisure hours to hers, faded to blankness before the glare of this uncompromising dilemma.

Eventually, as you will have guessed, the parents, using to the full the thousand tiny opportunities for influence and pressure that their position gave them, won the day. Blanche was so broken in spirit, and her love for Murdoch so abject, that she stooped to a dismissal by post. She wrote an abrupt but cringing note, to which he did not reply, and, until she received news of his actual sailing for Australia, spent her life in terror of meeting him.

There was a certain amount of ill-natured gossip among acquaintances, for the two had been noticeably inseparable, and Murdoch's look and manner curiously more possessive than is usual even in a fiancé. Personally, although I was glad that Blanche was free and welcomed her slow return to normal, riotous cheerfulness, I always wondered in my heart whether Murdoch were not the sort of man to turn up again—and in an ugly mood—at the most inconvenient moment.

Eighteen months passed and Blanche was engaged again. This time her choice was a young Scotch laird, gay and wealthy, conventionally self-indulgent, but—not surprisingly—strict in his view of women and vindictive with the stupid ingenuity of Scotch self-righteousness.

The wedding took place and I was a bridesmaid. The couple went abroad for their honeymoon, promising to be back in their fine new London house for the autumn. A few days after their departure I found myself placed at a dinner party next to Kenneth Murdoch. My surprise at his sudden appearance was increased by his affability. I had

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never known his touch so light. He had been to Australia and had triumphed; was now enjoying London doubly for his exile; chattered of theaters and country-house parties; told me of his plans for autumn shooting. I forgot my old antagonism and, warming to his easy geniality, began an unthinking conversation about former common friends. But I was not so bemused that it did not startle me when he asked:

"And Miss Radnor? How is she?"

"Oh, she's just married," I replied, assuming the eagerness of one who has unwittingly overlooked an important piece of news.

"I shall look forward to seeing her again," he said, "and offering my congratulations. Perhaps a belated wedding present would be forgiven. I have been home so short a time."

And with quiet competence he glided off into further mutual reminiscences.

Several times in the summer that followed I came across him, each time accepting more joyfully the change in him, each time losing grip more completely on the forbidding Murdoch of my memory. When Blanche got home, I mentioned his name during one of our first intimate conversations. She was much interested to hear of him again and suggested I should bring him to tea. I did so, and there was neither embarrassment nor affectation of cordiality. The incident of the broken engagement was clearly at an end.

After the passing of two successful house warmings, Blanche had the idea of a fancy-dress ball. Her husband encouraged the scheme, and there was much talk of costume and of Clarkson's and of how little one should dare to wear. We had motored out to lunch in Surrey, and were coming home in the smooth, keen sunlight of a November afternoon. The car was a large one, but full to discomfort of Blanche, her husband, myself, two girls—schoolmates of ours—and the brother of one

of them. As we swept up Richmond Hill toward the park, we were all talking at once about the latest freak idea for a surprise tableau. Suddenly Blanche screamed above the din:

"There's Kenneth! He must come! Stop! Stop!" And she banged on the glass behind the chauffeur's head.

As the car swerved to the curb, Kenneth Murdoch trotted his horse across the road and reined in by Blanche's side.

"Kenneth, we are having a dance, and you've got to come. There's to be a water carnival and a snow scene and lots of things. What'll you wear?"

"Really, I must have a moment's thought. A pierrot would be distinguished. No one else will dare. Like traveling third on Coronation Day. Carriages empty. What are you going as?"

Naturally we answered in chorus and he listened politely.

"I've a better idea for you, Blanche," he said at last. "Something cool and cheap and utterly original. Go as that!"—jerking his thumb over his shoulder at the building that stood behind him—"Go as the *Star and Garter*!"

And he pulled his horse round and trotted down the hill to Richmond.

As though by collusion the car started once more on its way. Blanche sat staring in front of her, white and breathless. I and the two girls—all of us in the first hideous gasp of comprehension—swung helpless over a pit of embarrassment. The brother, glancing curiously at all of us, lit a cigarette and studied the view. With a great effort I forced some fatuous change of subject. As I did so, I noticed the face of Blanche's husband: it was set in lines of cruel fury, and his red ears worked horribly with the twitching of his scalp. Characteristically, he took no steps, then or afterward, to thrash Murdoch or to call him out. He merely devoted his very considerable energies to making Blanche's life the hell that it became.

Courts of Love and Parliaments of Joy

By Edgar Saltus

IN the Middle Ages, before chivalry departed, and very shortly after it appeared, love was made the subject of law, for the administration of which courts open and plenary were founded, at once academies of fine sentiments, and parliaments of joy.

In English dominions on the Continent generally, as also in Flanders, Champagne and Provence, these courts were frequent. In describing them Nostradamus said that "disputes arising from the beautiful and subtle questions of love were submitted to illustrious ladies, who, after deliberation, rendered judgments." Of the beautiful and subtle questions here is one:



A confidant, charged by a friend with messages of love, found the lady so to his liking that he addressed her in his own behalf. Instead of being repulsed, he was encouraged. Thereupon the injured party brought suit. Maitre André, prothonotary of the court, relates that the plaintiff prayed that the fraud be submitted to the Countess of Champagne, who, sitting in banco with sixty ladies, heard the complaint, and, on deliberation, rendered judgment as follows: "It is ordered that the defendants henceforth be debarred the frequentation of honest people."



Here is another instance: A knight was charged by a lady not to say or do anything in her praise. It so fell about that her name was lightly taken. The knight challenged the defamer. Thereupon the lady contended that he had forfeited all claim to her regard. Action having been brought, the court decided that the defense of a lady being never illicit, the knight should be rehabilitated in favor and reinstated in grace. Which, the prothonotary states, was done.



To love and to be loved is not simple but complex. In the middle ages it was usually from the woman that the initial recognition proceeded. It was she who did the selecting. In the best society she does so still. To encourage her, the courts of love authorized a form of contemplative union in which lovers exchanged vows similar to those taken at the investiture of a vassal. The knight knelt before the lady, put his hands in hers, and acknowledged himself her liegeman. The homage was formally accepted. The knight received a kiss which was renewable every year. But nothing more. In theory at least. Any further reward of fealty being due to the sheer generosity of the lady who then was lord. The kiss, how-

ever, was collectable. In the event of deferred payment action could be brought. One was. By way of defense the defendant alleged that Mr. Danger was present. Mr. Danger was the defendant's husband!



Gerard de Roussillon described a lady who, while marrying one man, coincidentally gave a ring and promise of love to another. The proceeding was strictly in accordance with the sentiment of the day which regarded love as incompatible with marriage. A case in point is contained in the reports of Martial d'Auvergne. A knight loved a lady who could not accept his vows inasmuch as she loved some one else. But she promised to do so if it so happened that she lost the other man—a contingency which to-day would mean if he died or ran away. Very differently the jurisprudence of the epoch interpreted it. The lady married the man she loved, whereupon the knight exacted the fulfillment of the agreement. Queen Eleanor, before whom the case was heard, decided in his favor, on the ground, perhaps subtle, that the lady's husband, in becoming her husband, became *ipso facto* by that very act, amatorially defunct.



In a case not similar but cognate, judgment rendered by the Countess of Champagne was as follows: "By these presents we declare and affirm that love cannot exist between married people for the reason that lovers grant everything unconstrainedly, whereas married people are obliged to submit to one another. Wherefore shall this decision, reached prudently in conformity with the opinion of many other ladies, be to you all a constant and irrefragible truth. So adjudged in the year of grace 1174, the third day of the calends of May, seventh indiction."



In another case Ermengarde of Narbonne decided that the addition of the marriage tie cannot invalidate a prior affair, nisi—unless the lady has in mind to have done with love forever.



Decretals of this nature, however absurd they may seem, were at least serviceable in the reforms they affected. According to civil law, if a husband absented himself for ten years, the wife had the right to remarry. According to the law of love, the absence of a lover, however prolonged, did not release the lady from her attachment. The civil law authorized a widow to remarry in a year and a day. The law of love exacted for the heart a widowhood of twice that period. The civil law permitted a husband to beat his wife reasonably. The law of love enforced for the lady respect.



The courts of love might go; their work endured. They made woman what she is to-day—the guide and associate of man. Slowly thereafter they followed knight-errantry to its grave.

by
Charles Reade
Author of *"Peck's Woffington"*



The
Box Tunnel

THE ten fifteen train glided from Paddington May 7, 1847. In the left compartment of a certain first-class carriage were four passengers; of these two were worth description. The lady had a smooth, white, delicate brow, strongly marked eyebrows, long lashes, eyes that seemed to change color, and a good-sized, delicious mouth, with teeth as white as milk. A man could not see her nose for her eyes and mouth; her own sex could, and would have told us some nonsense about it. She wore an unpretending grayish dress, buttoned to the throat with lozenge-shaped buttons, and a Scottish shawl that agreeably evaded color. She was like a duck, so tight her plain feathers fitted her, and there she sat, smooth, snug, and delicious, with a book in her hand and a soupçon of her wrist just visible as she held it.

Her opposite neighbor was what I call a good style of man, the more to

his credit since he belonged to a corporation that frequently turns out the worst imaginable style of young men. He was a cavalry officer, aged twenty-five. He had a mustache, but not a very repulsive one—not one of those subnasal pigtails on which soup is suspended like dew on a shrub; it was short, thick, and black as a coal. His teeth had not yet been turned by tobacco smoke to the color of juice; his clothes did not stick to nor hang to him; he had an engaging smile, and, what I liked the dog for, his vanity, which was inordinate, was in its proper place, his heart, not in his face, jostling mine and other people's who have none; in a word, he was what one oftener hears of than meets—a young gentleman.

He was conversing in an animated whisper with a companion, a fellow officer; they were talking about what it is far better not to—women. Our friend clearly did not wish to be over-

heard; for he cast ever and anon a furtive glance at his fair vis-à-vis and lowered his voice. She seemed completely absorbed in her book, and that reassured him. At last the two soldiers came down to a whisper—the truth must be told. The one who got down at Slough, and was lost to posterity, bet ten pounds to three that he who was going down with us to Bath and immortality would not kiss either of the ladies opposite upon the road. "Done, done!" Now I am sorry a man I have hitherto praised should have lent himself, even in a whisper, to such a speculation; "but nobody is wise at all hours," not even when the clock is striking five and twenty, and you are to consider his profession, his good looks, and the temptation—ten to three.

After Slough the party was reduced to three. At Twylford one lady dropped her handkerchief; Captain Dolignan fell on it like a lamb; two or three words were interchanged on this occasion. At Reading the Marlborough of our tale made one of the safe investments of that day; he bought a *Times* and *Punch*—the latter full of steel-pen thrusts and woodcuts. Valor and beauty deigned to laugh at some inflamed humbug or other punctured by *Punch*. Now, laughing together thaws our human ice; long before Swindon it was a talking match; at Swindon who so devoted as Captain Dolignan? He handed them out, he souped them, he tough-chickened them, he brandied and cochinealed one, and he brandied and burned-sugared the other; on their return to the carriage one lady passed into the inner compartment to inspect a certain gentleman's seat on that side of the line.

Reader, had it been you or I, the beauty would have been the deserter, the average one would have stayed with us till all was blue, ourselves included; not more surely does our slice of bread and butter, when it escapes from our

hand, revolve it ever so often, alight face downward on the carpet. But this was a bit of a fop, Adonis, dragoon—so Venus remained in tête-à-tête with him. You have seen a dog meet an unknown female of his species; how handsome, how *empresé*, how expressive he becomes: such was Dolignan after Swindon, and, to do the dog justice, he got handsomer and handsomer. And you have seen a cat conscious of approaching cream: such was Miss Haythorn; she became demurer and demurer. Presently our captain looked out of the window and laughed; this elicited an inquiring look from Miss Haythorn.

"We are only a mile from the Box Tunnel."

"Do you always laugh a mile from the Box Tunnel?" said the lady.

"Invariably."

"What for?"

"Why, hem! it is a gentleman's joke."

Captain Dolignan then recounted to Miss Haythorn the following:

"A lady and her husband sat together going through the Box Tunnel; there was one gentleman opposite; it was pitch dark. After the tunnel the lady said: 'George, how absurd of you to salute me going through the tunnel!' 'I did no such thing.' 'You didn't?' 'No; why?' 'Because somehow I thought you did!'"

Here Captain Dolignan laughed and endeavored to lead his companion to laugh, but it was not to be done. The train entered the tunnel.

Miss Haythorn: Ah!

Dolignan: What is the matter?

Miss Haythorn: I am frightened.

Dolignan (moving to her side): Pray do not be alarmed; I am near you.

Miss Haythorn: You are near me—very near me indeed, Captain Dolignan.

Dolignan: You know my name?

Miss Haythorn: I heard you mention

it. I wish we were out of this dark place.

Dolignan: I could be content to spend hours here reassuring you, my dear lady.

Miss Haythorn: Nonsense!

Dolignan: Pwweep!

Grave reader, do not put your lips to the next pretty creature you meet, or you will understand what this means.

Miss Haythorn: Ee! Ee!

Friend: What is the matter?

Miss Haythorn: Open the door! Open the door!

There was a sound of hurried whippers; the door was shut and the blind pulled down with hostile sharpness.

If any critic falls on me for putting inarticulate sounds in a dialogue as above, I answer, with all the insolence I can command at present: "Hit boys as big as yourself"—bigger, perhaps, such as Sophocles, Euripides, and Aristophanes; they began it, and I learned it of them sore against my will.

Miss Haythorn's scream lost most of its effect because the engine whistled forty thousand murders at the same moment, and fictitious grief makes itself heard when real cannot.

Between the tunnel and Bath our young friend had time to ask himself whether his conduct had been marked by that delicate reserve which is supposed to distinguish the perfect gentleman.

With a long face, real or feigned, he held open the door; his late friends attempted to escape on the other side. Impossible! They must pass him. She whom he had insulted—Latin for kissed—deposited somewhere at his feet a look of gentle, blushing reproach; the other, whom he had not insulted, darted red-hot daggers at him from her eyes; and so they parted.

It was perhaps fortunate for Dolignan that he had the grace to be a friend to Major Hoskyns of his regiment, a veteran laughed at by the youngsters,

for the major was too apt to look coldly upon billiard balls and cigars; he had seen cannon balls and linestocks. He had also, to tell the truth, swallowed a good bit of the mess-room poker, which made it as impossible for Major Hoskyns to descend to an ungentlemanlike word or action as to brush his own trousers below the knee.

Captain Dolignan told this gentleman his story in gleeful accents; but Major Hoskyns heard him coldly, and as coldly answered that he had known a man to lose his life for the same thing.

"That is nothing," continued the major; "but unfortunately he deserved to lose it."

At this blood mounted to the younger man's temples, and his senior added: "I mean to say he was thirty-five; you, I presume, are twenty-one!"

"Twenty-five."

"That is much the same thing; will you be advised by me?"

"If you will advise me."

"Speak to no one of this, and send White the three pounds, that he may think you have lost the bet."

"That is hard, when I won it."

"Do it, for all that, sir."

Let the disbelievers in human perfectibility know that this dragoon, capable of a blush, did this virtuous action, albeit with violent reluctance; and this was his first damper. A week after these events he was at a ball. He was in that state of factitious discontent which belongs to us amiable English. He was looking in vain for a lady equal in personal attraction to the idea he had formed of George Dolignan as a man, when suddenly there glided past him a most delightful vision—a lady whose beauty and symmetry took him by the eyes; another look: "It can't be! Yes, it is!" Miss Haythorn—not that he knew her name—but what an apotheosis!

The duck had become a peahen—radiant, dazzling; she looked twice, as

beautiful and almost twice as large as before. He lost sight of her; he found her again. She was so lovely she made him ill, and he alone must not dance with her, speak to her. If he had been content to begin her acquaintance the usual way it might have ended in kissing; it must end in nothing. As she danced sparks of beauty fell from her on all around but him; she did not see him; it was clear she never would see him. One gentleman was particularly assiduous; she smiled on his assiduity; he was ugly, but she smiled on him. Dolignan was surprised at his success, his ill taste, his ugliness, his impertinence. Dolignan at last found himself injured; who was this man? And what right had he to go on so? "He never kissed her, I suppose," said Dolle. Dolignan could not prove it, but he felt that somehow the rights and property were invaded. He went home and dreamed of Miss Haythorn, and hated all the ugly successful.

He spent a fortnight trying to find out who his beauty was; he never could encounter her again. At last he heard of her in this way: a lawyer's clerk paid him a little visit and commenced a little action against him in the name of Miss Haythorn for insulting her in a railway train.

The young gentleman was shocked, endeavored to soften the lawyer's clerk; that machine did not thoroughly comprehend the meaning of the term. The lady's name, however, was at last revealed by this untoward incident; from her name to her address was but a short step, and the same day our crestfallen hero lay in wait at her door, and many a succeeding day, without effect. But one fine afternoon she issued forth quite naturally, as if she did it every day, and walked briskly on the parade. Dolignan did the same, met and passed her many times on the parade, and searched for pity in her eyes, but found neither look nor recognition nor any

other sentiment; for all this she walked and walked till all the other promenaders were tired and gone; then her culprit summoned resolution, and, taking off his hat, with a voice for the first time tremulous, besought permission to address her.

She stopped, blushed, and neither acknowledged nor disowned his acquaintance. He blushed, stammered out how ashamed he was, how he deserved to be punished, how he was punished, how little she knew how unhappy he was, and concluded by begging her not to let all the world know the disgrace of a man who was already mortified enough by the loss of her acquaintance. She asked an explanation; he told her of the action that had been commenced in her name; she gently shrugged her shoulders, and said: "How stupid they are!" Emboldened by this, he begged to know whether or not a life of distant, unpretending devotion would, after a lapse of years, erase the memory of his madness—his crime!

She did not know!

She must now bid him adieu, as she had some preparations to make for a ball in the Crescent, where everybody was to be. They parted, and Dolignan determined to be at the ball where everybody was to be. He was there, and after some time he obtained an introduction to Miss Haythorn and he danced with her. Her manner was gracious. With the wonderful tact of her sex, she seemed to have commenced the acquaintance that evening. That night for the first time Dolignan was in love. I will spare the reader all a lover's arts by which he succeeded in dining where she dined, in dancing where she danced, in overtaking her by accident when she rode. His devotion followed her to church, where the dragoon was rewarded by learning there is a world where they neither polk nor smoke—the two capital abominations of this one.

He made an acquaintance with her

uncle, who liked him, and he saw at last with joy that her eye loved to dwell upon him when she thought he did not observe her. It was three months after the Box Tunnel that Captain Dolignan called one day upon Captain Haythorn, R. N., whom he had met twice in his life, and slightly propitiated by violently listening to a cutting-out expedition; he called, and in the usual way asked permission to pay his addresses to his daughter. The worthy captain straightway began doing quarter-deck, when suddenly he was summoned from the apartment by a mysterious message. On his return he announced, with a total change of voice, that it was all right, and his visitor might run alongside as soon as he chose. My reader has divined the truth; this nautical commander, terrible to the foe, was in complete and happy subjugation to his daughter, our heroine.

As he was taking leave, Dolignan saw his divinity glide into the drawing-room. He followed her, observed a sweet consciousness deepen into confusion; she tried to laugh, and cried instead, and then she smiled again; when he kissed her hand at the door it was "George" and "Marian" instead of "Captain" this and "Miss" the other.

A reasonable time after this—for my tale is merciful and skips formalities and torturing delays—these two were very happy; they were once more upon the railroad, going to enjoy their honeymoon all by themselves. Marian Dolignan was dressed just as before—duck-like and delicious, all bright except her clothes; but George sat beside her this time instead of opposite, and she drank him in gently from her long eyelashes.



COQUETRY, a science innate in every woman, from her first long clothes to her wedding dress.—*Henri Murger.*



As some one somewhere sagely stated: "It is better to have loved your wife, than never to have loved at all."—*Edgar Saltus.*

"Marian," said George, "married people should tell each other all. Will you ever forgive me if I own to you; no, I fear——"

"Yes, yes!"

"Well then, you remember the Box Tunnel?" This was the first allusion he had ventured to it. "I am ashamed to say I had three pounds to ten pounds with White I would kiss one of you two ladies," and George, pathetic externally, chuckled within.

"I know that, George; I overheard you," was the demure reply.

"Oh! you overheard me! Impossible!"

"And did you not hear me whisper to my companion? I made a bet with her."

"You made a bet? How singular! What was it?"

"Only a pair of gloves, George."

"Yes, I know; but what about it?"

"That if you did, you should be my husband, dearest."

"Oh! but stay! Then you could not have been so very angry with me, love. Why, dearest, then you brought that action against me!"

Mrs. Dolignan looked down.

"I was afraid you were forgetting me! George, you will never forgive me?"

"Sweet angel! Why, here is the Box Tunnel!"

Now, reader—fie! no! no such thing! You can't expect to be indulged in this way every time we come to a dark place. Besides, it is not the thing. Consider—two sensible, married people. No such phenomenon, I assure you, took place. No scream in hopeless rivalry of the engine—this time!

A Book Lovers' Tournament

*Introducing a new kind
of mystery story*

In THE FORETASTE of this issue are announced the title and author of the January anonymous story and the names of the successful entrants in the January BOOK LOVERS' TOURNAMENT.—The Editor.

HOW fully does the style betray the writer? Could you detect the essence of Shakespeare in an obscure passage of his work? Could you read "Dickens" between the lines of a Pickwickian dialogue? Would the felicitous flow of an anonymous extract from a Stevenson romance reveal its author to you?

On the next page you will find a complete story whose title is withheld and whose author is left anonymous. The name of the author is known wherever books are circulated.

Can you identify the author and the story?

* * * * *

IF you can detect the title of this month's anonymous story and the name of its author, send us a letter of not more than one thousand words, and in it tell us:

1. The title of the story.
2. The full name of the story's author.
3. Your reason for attributing the story to the author you have named.
4. How you discovered the title of the story.
5. What you think of the story.

* * * * *

TO the writer of the most interesting letter composed as above outlined and correctly naming the title and author of the anonymous story appearing in this issue of AINSLEE'S MAGAZINE, the editors will pay fifty dollars. To each of the writers of the ten letters next in order of excellence the editors will pay five dollars.

* * * * *

LETTERS will be judged on the basis of literary merit and authenticated accuracy. In order to receive consideration, each letter must show that its writer has definite knowledge of the anonymous story's title and author. This knowledge may come of standing familiarity with the works of the author under consideration, or may be derived from inquiry, research, and comparison. But each letter must clearly explain on what authority its writer bases his conclusion. Letters which exhibit evidence of guesswork will not receive consideration.

* * * * *

ALL letters competing in the Book Lovers' Tournament of this issue must be received by the Editor of AINSLEE'S MAGAZINE, at 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City, on or before March 10th, 1926.

The names of successful contestants will be published in AINSLEE'S MAGAZINE for the month of May, 1926.

There will be another anonymous story in the April issue.

Who Wrote This Story?



What Is Its Title?

SHE said that she would dance with me if I brought her red roses," cried the young Student; "but in all my garden there is no red rose."

From her nest in the holm-oak tree the Nightingale heard him, and she looked out through the leaves and wondered.

"No red rose in all my garden!" he cried, and his beautiful eyes filled with tears. "Ah, on what little things does happiness depend! I have read all that the wise men have written, and all the secrets of philosophy are mine, yet for want of a red rose is my life made wretched."

"Here at last is a true lover," said the Nightingale. "Night after night have I sung of him, though I knew him not; night after night have I told his story to the stars, and now I see him. His hair is dark as the hyacinth blossom, and his lips are red as the rose of his desire; but passion has made his face like pale ivory, and sorrow has set her seal upon his brow."

"The Prince gives a ball to-morrow night," murmured the young Student, "and my love will be of the company. If I bring her a red rose she will dance

with me till dawn. If I bring her a red rose, I shall hold her in my arms, and she will lean her head upon my shoulder, and her hand will be clasped in mine. But there is no red rose in my garden, so I shall sit lonely, and she will pass me by. She will have no heed of me, and my heart will break."

"Here indeed is the true lover," said the Nightingale. "What I sing of, he suffers; what is joy to me, to him is pain. Surely love is a wonderful thing. It is more precious than emeralds, and dearer than fine opals. Pearls and pomegranates cannot buy it, nor is it set forth in the market place. It may not be purchased of the merchants, nor can it be weighed out in the balance for gold."

"The musicians will sit in their gallery," said the young Student, "and play upon their stringed instruments, and my love will dance to the sound of the harp and the violin. She will dance so lightly that her feet will not touch the floor, and the courtiers in their gay dresses will throng round her. But with me she will not dance, for I have no red rose to give her." And he flung himself

down on the grass, and buried his face in his hands, and wept.

"Why is he weeping?" asked a little Green Lizard, as he ran past him with his tail in the air.

"Why, indeed?" said a Butterfly, who was fluttering about after a sunbeam.

"Why, indeed?" whispered a Daisy to his neighbor in a soft, low voice.

"He is weeping for a red rose," said the Nightingale.

"For a red rose!" they cried. "How very ridiculous!" And the little Lizard, who was something of a cynic, laughed outright.

But the Nightingale understood the secret of the Student's sorrow, and she sat silent in the oak tree, and thought about the mystery of love.

Suddenly she spread her brown wings for flight and soared into the air. She passed through the grove like a shadow, and like a shadow she sailed across the garden.

In the center of the grass plot was standing a beautiful Rose Tree, and when she saw it, she flew over to it and lit upon a spray.

"Give me a red rose," she cried, "and I will sing you my sweetest song."

But the Tree shook its head.

"My roses are white," it answered; "as white as the foam of the sea, and whiter than the snow upon the mountain. But go to my brother who grows round the old sun dial, and perhaps he will give you what you want."

So the Nightingale flew over to the Rose Tree that was growing round the old sun dial.

"Give me a red rose," she cried, "and I will sing you my sweetest song."

But the Tree shook its head.

"My roses are yellow," it answered; "as yellow as the hair of the mermaid who sits upon an amber throne, and yellower than the daffodil that blooms in the meadow before the mower comes with his scythe. But go to my brother who grows beneath the Student's win-

dow, and perhaps he will give you what you want."

So the Nightingale flew over to the Rose Tree that was growing beneath the Student's window.

"Give me a red rose," she cried, "and I will sing you my sweetest song."

But the Tree shook its head.

"My roses are red," it answered; "as red as the feet of the dove, and redder than the great fans of coral that wave and wave in the ocean cavern. But the winter has chilled my veins, and the frost has nipped my buds, and the storm has broken my branches, and I shall have no roses at all this year."

"One red rose is all I want," cried the Nightingale. "Only one red rose! Is there any way by which I can get it?"

"There is a way," answered the Tree; "but it is so terrible that I dare not tell it to you."

"Tell it to me," said the Nightingale; "I am not afraid."

"If you want a red rose," said the Tree, "you must build it out of music by moonlight, and stain it with your own heart's blood. You must sing to me with your breast against a thorn. All night long you must sing to me, and the thorn must pierce your heart, and your life blood must flow into my veins, and become mine."

"Death is a great price to pay for a red rose," cried the Nightingale, "and life is very dear to all. It is pleasant to sit in the green wood, and to watch the Sun in his chariot of gold, and the Moon in her chariot of pearl. Sweet is the scent of the hawthorn, and sweet are the bluebells that hide in the valley, and the heather that blows on the hill. Yet love is better than life, and what is the heart of a bird compared to the heart of a man?"

So she spread her brown wings for flight and soared into the air. She swept over the garden like a shadow, and like a shadow she sailed through the grove.

The young Student was still lying on the grass where she had left him, and the tears were not yet dry in his beautiful eyes.

"Be happy!" cried the Nightingale. "Be happy; you shall have your red rose. I will build it out of music by moonlight, and stain it with my own heart's blood. All that I ask of you in return is that you will be a true lover, for Love is wiser than Philosophy, though she is wise, and mightier than Power, though she is mighty. Flame colored are his wings, and colored like flame is his body. His lips are sweet as honey, and his breath is like frankincense."

The Student looked up from the grass and listened, but he could not understand what the Nightingale was saying to him, for he only knew the things that are written down in books.

But the Oak Tree understood, and felt sad, for he was very fond of the little Nightingale who had built her nest in his branches.

"Sing me one last song," he whispered; "I shall feel very lonely when you are gone."

So the Nightingale sang to the Oak Tree, and her voice was like water bubbling from a silver jar.

When she had finished her song the Student got up and pulled a note book and a lead pencil out of his pocket.

"She has form," he said to himself, as he walked away through the grove "that cannot be denied her; but has she got feeling? I am afraid not. In fact, she is like most artists; she is all style, without any sincerity. She would not sacrifice herself for others. She thinks merely of music, and everybody knows that the arts are selfish. Still, it must be admitted that she has some beautiful notes in her voice. What a pity it is that they do not mean anything, or do any practical good." And he went into his room and lay down on his little pallet bed and began to

think of his love; and, after a time, he fell asleep.

And when the Moon shone in the heavens the Nightingale flew to the Rose Tree and set her breast against the thorn. All night long she sang with her breast against the thorn, and the cold, crystal Moon leaned down and listened. All night long she sang, and the thorn went deeper and deeper into her breast, and her life blood ebbed away from her.

She sang first of the birth of love in the heart of a boy and a girl. And on the topmost spray of the Rose Tree there blossomed a marvelous rose; petal followed petal, as song followed song. Pale was it, at first, as the mist that hangs over the river—pale as the feet of the morning, and silver as the wings of the dawn. As the shadow of a rose in a mirror of silver, as the shadow of a rose in a water pool, so was the rose that blossomed on the topmost spray of the Tree.

But the Tree cried to the Nightingale to press closer against the thorn. "Press closer, little Nightingale," cried the Tree, "or the day will come before the rose is finished."

So the Nightingale pressed closer against the thorn, and louder and louder grew her song, for she sang of the birth of passion in the soul of a man and a maid.

And a delicate flush of pink came into the leaves of the rose, like the flush in the face of the bridegroom when he kisses the lips of the bride. But the thorn had not yet reached her heart, so the rose's heart remained white, for only a nightingale's heart's blood can crimson the heart of a rose.

And the Tree cried to the Nightingale to press closer against the thorn. "Press closer, little Nightingale," cried the Tree, "or the day will come before the rose is finished."

So the Nightingale pressed closer against the thorn, and the thorn touched

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her heart, and a fierce pang of pain shot through her. Bitter, bitter was the pain, and wilder and wilder grew her song, for she sang of the love that is perfected by death, of the love that dies not in the tomb.

And the marvelous rose became crimson, like the rose of the eastern sky. Crimson was the girdle of petals, and crimson as a ruby was the heart.

But the Nightingale's voice grew fainter, and her little wings began to beat, and a film came over her eyes. Fainter and fainter grew her song, and she felt something choking her in her throat.

Then she gave one last burst of music. The white Moon heard it, and she forgot the dawn, and lingered on in the sky. The red rose heard it, and it trembled all over with ecstasy, and opened its petals to the cold morning air. Echo bore it to her purple cavern in the hills, and woke the sleeping shepherds from their dreams. It floated through the reeds of the river, and they carried its message to the sea.

"Look, look!" cried the Tree. "The rose is finished now." But the Nightingale made no answer, for she was lying dead in the long grass, with the thorn in her heart.

And at noon the Student opened his window and looked out.

"Why, what a wonderful piece of luck!" he cried. "Here is a red rose! I have never seen any rose like it in all my life. It is so beautiful that I am sure it has a long Latin name." And he leaned down and plucked it.

Then he put on his hat, and ran up to the professor's house with the rose in his hand.

The daughter of the professor was sitting in the doorway winding blue silk on a reel, and her little dog was lying at her feet.

"You said that you would dance with me if I brought you a red rose," cried the Student. "Here is the reddest rose in all the world. You will wear it to-night next your heart, and as we dance together it will tell you how I love you."

But the girl frowned.

"I am afraid it will not go with my dress," she answered; "and, besides, the chamberlain's nephew has sent me some real jewels, and everybody knows that jewels cost far more than flowers."

"Well, upon my word, you are very ungrateful," said the Student angrily; and he threw the rose into the street, where it fell into the gutter, and a cart wheel went over it.

"Ungrateful!" said the girl. "I tell you what, you are very rude; and, after all, who are you? Only a Student. Why, I don't believe you have even got silver buckles to your shoes as the chamberlain's nephew has." And she got up from her chair and went into the house.

"What a silly thing love is," said the Student as he walked away. "It is not half as useful as logic, for it does not prove anything, and it is always telling one of the things that are not going to happen, and making one believe things that are not true. In fact, it is quite unpractical, and, as in this age to be practical is everything, I shall go back to Philosophy and study metaphysics."

So he returned to his room, and pulled out a great dusty book, and began to read.

How is it that the poets have said so many fine things about our first love, and so few about our later love? Are their first poems their best? Or are not those the best which come from their fuller thought, their larger experience, their deeper-rooted affections? The boy's flutelike voice has its own spring charm; but the man should yield a richer, deeper music.—George Eliot.

by May Sinclair

Author of:

*"The Divine
Fire"*



The Token

I HAVE only known one absolutely adorable woman, and that was my brother's wife, Cicely Dunbar.

Sisters-in-law do not, I think, invariably adore each other, and I am aware that my chief merit in Cicely's eyes was that I am Donald's sister; but for me there was no question of extraneous quality—it was all pure Cicely.

And how Donald— But then, like all the Dunbars, Donald suffers from being Scottish, so that, if he has a feeling, he makes it a point of honor to pretend he hasn't it. I dare say he let himself go a bit during his courtship, when he was not, strictly speaking, himself; but after he had once married her I think he would have died rather than have told Cicely in so many words that he loved her. And Cicely wanted to be told. You say she ought to have known without telling? You don't know Donald. You can't conceive the perverse ingenuity he could put into hiding his affection. He has that peculiar temper

—I think it's Scottish—that delights in snubbing and fault-finding and defeating expectation. If he knows you want him to do a thing, that alone is reason enough with Donald for not doing it. And my sister, who was as transparent as white crystal, was never able to conceal a want. So that Donald could, as we said, "have" her at every turn.

And, then, I don't think my brother really knew how ill she was. He didn't want to know. Besides, he was so wrapped up in trying to finish his "Development of Social Economics"—which, by the way, he hasn't finished yet—that he had no eyes to see what we all saw: that, the way her poor little heart was going, Cicely couldn't have very long to live.

Of course he understood that this was why, in those last months, they had to have separate rooms. And this in the first year of their marriage when he was still violently in love with her. I keep those two facts firmly in my mind when I try to excuse Donald; for it was the

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main cause of that unkindness and perversity which I find it so hard to forgive. Even now, when I think how he used to discharge it on the poor little thing, as if it had been her fault, I have to remind myself that the lamb's innocence made her a little trying.

She couldn't understand why Donald didn't want to have her with him in his library any more while he read or wrote. It seemed to her sheer cruelty to shut her out now when she was ill, seeing that, before she was ill, she had always had her chair by the fireplace, where she would sit over her book or her embroidery for hours without speaking, hardly daring to breathe lest she should interrupt him. Now was the time, she thought, when she might expect a little indulgence.

Do you suppose that Donald would give his feelings as an explanation? Not he. They were *his feelings*, and he wouldn't talk about them; and he never explained anything you didn't understand.

That—her wanting to sit with him in the library—was what they had the awful quarrel about, the day before she died: that and the paper weight, the precious paper weight that he wouldn't let anybody touch because George Meredith had given it him. It was a brass block, surmounted by a white alabaster Buddha painted and gilt. And it had an inscription:

To Donald Dunbar, from George Meredith.
In Affectionate Regard.

My brotlier was extremely attached to this paper weight, partly, I'm afraid, because it proclaimed his intimacy with the great man. For this reason it was known in the family ironically as the Token.

It stood on Donald's writing table at his elbow, so near the ink pot that the white Buddha had received a splash or two. And this evening Cicely had come in to us in the library, and had annoyed

Donald by staying in it when he wanted her to go. She had taken up the Token, and was cleaning it to give herself a pretext.

She died after the quarrel they had then.

It began by Donald shouting at her. "What are you doing with that paper weight?"

"Only getting the ink off."

I can see her now, the darling. She had wetted the corner of her handkerchief with her little pink tongue and was rubbing the Buddha. Her hands had begun to tremble when he shouted.

"Put it down, can't you? I've told you not to touch my things."

"You inked him," she said. She was giving one last rub as he rose, threatening.

"Put—it—down!"

And, poor child, she did put it down. Indeed, she dropped it at his feet.

"Oh!" she cried out, and stooped quickly and picked it up. Her large, tear-glassed eyes glanced at him, frightened.

"He isn't broken."

"No thanks to you," he growled.

"You beast! You know I'd die rather than break anything you care about."

"It'll be broken some day, if you *will* come meddling."

I couldn't bear it. I said: "You mustn't yell at her like that. You know she can't stand it. You'll make her ill again."

That sobered him for a moment.

"I'm sorry," he said; but he made it sound as if he wasn't.

"If you're sorry," she persisted, "you might let me stay with you. I'll be as quiet as a mouse."

"No; I don't want you—I can't work with you in the room."

"You can work with Helen."

"You're not Helen."

"He only means he's not in love with *me*, dear."

"He means I'm no use to him. I know I'm not. I can't even sit on his manuscripts and keep them down. He cares more for that damned paper weight than he does for me."

"Well—George Meredith gave it me."

"And nobody gave you me. I gave myself."

That worked up his devil again. He had to torment her.

"It can't have cost you much," he said. "And I may remind you that the paper weight has *some* intrinsic value."

With that he left her.

"What's he gone out for?" she asked me.

"Because he's ashamed of himself, I suppose," I said. "Oh, Cicely, why *will* you answer him? You know what he is."

"No!" she said passionately. "That's what I don't know. I never have known."

"At least you know he's in love with you."

"He has a queer way of showing it, then. He never does anything but stamp and shout and find fault with me—all about an old paper weight!"

She was caressing it as she spoke, stroking the alabaster Buddha as if it had been a live thing.

"His poor Buddha. Do you think it'll break if I stroke it? Better not. Honestly, Helen, I'd rather die than hurt anything he really cared for. Yet look how he hurts me."

"Some men must hurt the things they care for."

"I wouldn't mind his hurting, if only I knew he cared. Helen—I'd give anything to know."

"I think you might know."

"I don't! I don't!"

"Well, you'll know some day."

"Never! He won't tell me."

"He's Scotch, my dear. It would kill him to tell you."

"Then how'm I to know! If I died to-morrow, I should die not knowing."

And that night, not knowing, she died.

She died because she had never really known.

We never talked about her. It was not my brother's way. Words hurt him, to speak or to hear them.

He had become more morose than ever, but less irritable, the source of his irritation being gone. Though he plunged into work as another man might have plunged into dissipation, to drown the thought of her, you could see that he had no longer any interest in it; he no longer loved it. He attacked it with a fury that had more hate in it than love. He would spend the greater part of the day and the long evenings shut up in his library, only going out for a short walk an hour before dinner. You could see that soon all spontaneous impulses would be checked in him and he would become the creature of habit and routine.

I tried to rouse him, to shake him up out of his deadly groove; but it was no use. The first effort—for he did make efforts—exhausted him, and he sank back into it again.

But he liked to have me with him; and all the time that I could spare from my housekeeping and gardening I spent in the library. I think he didn't like to be left alone there in the place where they had the quarrel that killed her; and I noticed that the cause of it, the Token, had disappeared from his table.

And all her things, everything that could remind him of her, had been put away. It was the dead burying its dead.

Only the chair she had loved remained in its place by the side of the hearth—her chair, if you could call it hers when she wasn't allowed to sit in it. It was always empty, for by tacit consent we both avoided it.

We would sit there for hours at a

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time without speaking, while he worked and I read or sewed. I never dared to ask him whether he sometimes had, as I had, the sense of Cicely's presence there, in that room which she had so longed to enter, from which she had been so cruelly shut out. You couldn't tell what he felt or didn't feel. My brother's face was a heavy, somber mask; his back, bent over the writing table, a wall behind which he hid himself.

You must know that twice in my life I have more than *felt* these presences; I have seen them. This may be because I am on both sides a Highland Celt, and my mother had the same uncanny gift. I had never spoken of these appearances to Donald because he would have put it all down to what he calls my hysterical fancy. And I am sure that if he ever felt or saw anything himself he would never own it.

I ought to explain that each time the vision was premonitory of a death—in Cicely's case I had no such warning—and each time it only lasted for a second; also that, though I am certain I was wide awake each time, it is open to anybody to say I was asleep and dreamed it. The queer thing was that I was neither frightened nor surprised.

And so I was neither surprised nor frightened now, the first evening that I saw her.

It was in the early autumn twilight, about six o'clock. I was sitting in my place in front of the fireplace; Donald was in his armchair on my left, smoking a pipe, as usual, before the lamplight drove him out of doors into the dark.

I had had so strong a sense of Cicely's being there in the room that I felt nothing but a sudden sacred pang that was half joy when I looked up and saw her sitting in her chair on my right.

The phantasm was perfect and vivid, as if it had been flesh and blood. I should have thought that it was Cicely herself if I hadn't known that she was

dead. She wasn't looking at me; her face was turned to Donald with that longing, wondering look it used to have, searching his face for the secret that he kept from her.

I looked at Donald. His chin was sunk a little, the pipe drooping from the corner of his mouth. He was heavy, absorbed in his smoking. It was clear that he did not see what I saw.

And whereas those other phantasms that I told you about disappeared at once, *this* lasted some little time, and always with its eyes fixed on Donald. It even lasted while Donald stirred, while he stooped forward, knocking the ashes out of his pipe against the hob, while he sighed, stretched himself, turned, and left the room. Then, as the door shut behind him, the whole figure went out suddenly—not flickering, but like a light you switch off.

I saw it again the next evening and the next, at the same time and in the same place, and with the same look turned toward Donald. And again I was sure that he did not see it. But I thought, from his uneasy sighing and stretching, that he had some sense of something there.

No; I was not frightened. I was glad. You see, I loved Cicely. I remember thinking: "At last, at last, you poor darling, you've got in. And you can stay as long as you like now. He can't turn you away."

The first few times I saw her just as I have said. I would look up and find the phantasm there, sitting in her chair. And it would disappear suddenly when Donald left the room. Then I knew I was alone.

But as I grew used to its presence, or perhaps as it grew used to mine and found out that I was not afraid of it, that indeed I loved to have it there, it came, I think, to trust me, so that I was made aware of all its movements. I would see it coming across the room from the doorway, making straight for

its desired place, and settling in a little curled-up posture of satisfaction, appeased, as if it had expected opposition that it no longer found. Yet that it was not happy, I could still see by its look at Donald. *That* never changed. It was as uncertain of him now as she had been in her lifetime.

Up till now, the sixth or seventh time I had seen it, I had no clew to the secret of its appearance; and its movements seemed to me mysterious and without purpose. Only two things were clear: it was Donald that it came for—the instant he went it disappeared; and I never once saw it when I was alone. And always it chose this room and this hour before the lights came, when he sat doing nothing. It was clear also that he never saw it.

But that it was there with him sometimes when I was not I knew; for, more than once, things on Donald's writing table, books or papers, would be moved out of their places, though never beyond reach; and he would ask me whether I had touched them.

"Either you lie," he would say, "or I'm mistaken. I could have sworn I put those notes on the *left*-hand side; and they aren't there now."

And once—that was wonderful—I saw, yes, I *saw* her come and push the lost thing under his hand. And all he said was: "Well, I'm—I could have sworn—"

For whether it had gained a sense of security, or whether its purpose was now finally fixed, it began to move regularly about the room, and its movements had evidently a reason and an aim.

It was looking for something.

One evening we were all there in our places, Donald silent in his chair and I in mine, and it seated in its attitude of wonder and of waiting, when suddenly I saw Donald looking at me.

"Helen," he said, "what are you staring for like that?"

I started. I had forgotten that the direction of my eyes would be bound, sooner or later, to betray me.

I heard myself stammer: "W-w-was I staring?"

"Yes. I wish you wouldn't."

I knew what he meant. He didn't want me to keep on looking at that chair; he didn't want to know that I was thinking of her. I bent my head closer over my sewing, so that I no longer had the phantasm in sight.

It was then I was aware that it had risen and was crossing the hearthrug. It stopped at Donald's knees, and stood there, gazing at him with a look so intent and fixed that I could not doubt that this had some significance. I saw it put out its hand and touch him; and, though Donald sighed and shifted his position, I could tell that he had neither seen nor felt anything.

It turned to me then—and this was the first time it had given any sign that it was conscious of my presence—it turned on me a look of supplication, such supplication as I had seen on my sister's face in her lifetime, when she could do nothing with him and implored me to intercede. At the same time three words formed themselves in my brain with a sudden, quick impulsion, as if I had heard them cried.

"Speak to him—speak to him!"

I knew now what it wanted. It was trying to make itself seen by him, to make itself felt, and it was in anguish at finding that it could not. It knew then that I saw it, and the idea had come to it that it could make use of me to get through to him.

I think I must have guessed even then what it had come for.

I said: "You asked me what I was staring at, and I lied. I was looking at Cicely's chair."

I saw him wince at the name.

"Because," I went on, "I don't know how *you* feel, but I always feel as if she were there."

He said nothing; but he got up, as though to shake off the oppression of the memory I had evoked, and stood leaning on the chimney piece with his back to me.

The phantasm retreated to its place, where it kept its eyes fixed on him as before.

I was determined to break down his defenses, to make him say something it might hear, give some sign that it would understand.

"Donald, do you think it's a good thing, a *kind* thing, never to talk about her?"

"Kind? Kind to whom?"

"To yourself, first of all."

"You can leave me out of it."

"To me, then."

"What's it ~~got~~ to do with you?" His voice was as hard and cutting as he could make it.

"Everything," I said. "You forget, I loved her."

He was silent. He did at least respect my love for her.

"But that wasn't what she wanted."

That hurt him. I could feel him stiffen under it.

"You see, Donald," I persisted, "I like thinking about her."

It was cruel of me; but I *had* to break him.

"You can think as much as you like," he said, "provided you stop talking."

"All the same, it's as bad for you," I said, "as it is for me—not talking."

"I don't care if it is bad for me. I can't talk about her, Helen. I don't want to."

"How do you know," I said, "it isn't bad for *her*?"

"For *her*?"

"I could see I had roused him."

"Yes. If she really is there, all the time."

"How d'you mean, *there*?"

"Here—in this room. I tell you I can't get over that feeling that she's here."

"Oh, feel, feel!" he said. "But don't talk to me about it!"

And he left the room, flinging himself out in anger. And instantly her flame went out.

I thought: "How he must have hurt her!" It was the old thing over again: I trying to break him down, to make him show her; he beating us both off, punishing us both. You see, I knew now what she had come back for: she had come back to find out whether he loved her. With a longing unquenched by death, she had come back for certainty. And now, as always, my clumsy interference had only made him more hard, more obstinate. I thought: "If only he could see her? But as long as he beats her off he never will."

Still, if I could once get him to believe that she was there—

I made up my mind that the next time I saw the phantasm I would tell him.

The next evening and the next its chair was empty, and I judged that it was keeping away, hurt by what it had heard the last time.

But the third evening we were hardly seated before I saw it.

It was sitting up, alert and observant, not staring at Donald as it used, but looking round the room, as if searching for something that it missed.

"Donald," I said, "if I told you that Cicely is in the room now, I suppose you wouldn't believe me?"

"Is it likely?"

"No. All the same, I see her as plainly as I see you."

The phantasm rose and moved to his side.

"She's standing close beside you."

And now it moved and went to the writing table. I turned and followed its movements. It slid its open hands over the table, touching everything, unmistakably feeling for something it believed to be there.

I went on. "She's at the writing table now. She's looking for something."

It stood back, baffled and distressed. Then suddenly it began opening and shutting the drawers, without a sound.

I said: "Oh, she's trying the drawers."

Donald stood up. He was not looking at the place where it was. He was looking hard at me, in anxiety and a sort of fright. I supposed that was why he remained unaware of the opening and shutting of the drawers.

It continued its desperate searching.

The bottom drawer stuck fast. I saw it pull and shake it.

"It's locked," I said.

"What's locked?"

"That bottom drawer."

"Nonsense! It's nothing of the kind."

"It is, I tell you. Give me the key."

He shrugged his shoulders; but all the same he felt in his pockets for the key, which he gave me.

I unlocked the drawer, pulled it out to its full length, and there, thrust away at the back, out of sight, I found the Token.

I had not seen it since the day of Cicely's death.

"Who put it there?" I asked.

"I did."

"Well, that's what she was looking for," I said.

I held out the Token to him on the palm of my hand, as if it were the proof that I had seen her.

"Helen," he said gravely, "I think you must be ill."

"You think so? I'm not so ill that I don't know what you put it away for," I said. "It was because she thought you cared for it more than for her."

"You can remind me of that? There must be something very badly wrong with you, Helen," he said.

"Perhaps. Perhaps I only want to know what *she* wanted. You *did* care for her, Donald?"

I couldn't see the phantasm now, but I could feel it, close, close, vibrating.

"Care?" he cried. "I was mad with caring for her! And she knew it."

"She didn't. She wouldn't be here now if she knew."

At that he turned from me to his station by the chimney piece. I followed.

"What are you going to do about it?"

"Do about it?"

"What are you going to do with this?"

I thrust the Token close toward him. He drew back, staring at it with a look of concentrated hate and loathing.

"Do with it?" he said. "The damned thing killed her! This is what I'm going to do with it!"

He snatched it from my hand and hurled it with all his force against the bars of the gate. The Buddha fell, broken to bits, among the ashes.

Then I heard him give a short, groaning cry. He stepped forward, opening his arms, and I saw the phantasm slide between them. For a second it stood there, folded to his breast; then suddenly, before our eyes, it collapsed in a shining heap, a flicker of light.

Then that went out too.

I never saw it again.

Neither did my brother. But I didn't know this till some time afterward; for, somehow, we hadn't cared to speak about it. And in the end it was he who spoke first.

We were sitting together in that room, one evening in November, when he said:

"Helen—do you never see her now?"

"No!" I said. "Never!"

"Do you think she doesn't come?"

"Why should she?" I said. "She found what she came for. She knows what she wanted to know."

"And that—was what?"

"Why, that you loved her."

His eyes had a queer, submissive, wistful look.

"You think that was why she came back?" he said.

by
E. W. Hornung

Author of:

*"The Ides of March"
and
"Gentlemen and
Players"*



Le Premier Pas

A Story of Raffles' The Amateur Cracksman.

THAT night he told me the story of his earliest crime. Not since the fateful morning of the ides of March, when he had just mentioned it as an unreported incident of a certain cricket tour, had I succeeded in getting a word out of Raffles on the subject. It was not for want of trying; he would shake his head, and watch his cigarette smoke thoughtfully; a subtle look in his eyes, half cynical, half wistful, as though the decent, honest days that were no more had had their merits after all.

Raffles would plan a fresh enormity, or glory in the last, with the unmitigated enthusiasm of the artist. It was impossible to imagine one throb or twitter of compunction beneath those frankly egoistic and infectious transports. And yet the ghost of a dead remorse seemed still to visit him with the memory of his first felony, so that I had

given the story up long before the night of our return from Milchester. Cricket, however, was in the air, and Raffles' cricket bag back where he sometimes kept it—in the fender, with the remains of an Orient label still adhering to the leather. My eyes had been on this label for some time, and I suppose his eyes had been on mine, for all at once he asked me if I still burned to hear that yarn.

"It's no use," I replied. "You won't spin it. I must imagine it for myself."

"How can you?"

"Oh, I begin to know your methods."

"You take it I went in with my eyes open, as I do now, eh?"

"I can't imagine your doing otherwise."

"My dear Bunny, it was the most unpremeditated thing I ever did in my life!"

His chair wheeled back into the books

as he sprang up with sudden energy. There was quite an indignant glitter in his eyes.

"I can't believe that," said I craftily. "I can't pay you such a poor compliment!"

"Then you must be a fool——"

He broke off, stared hard at me, and in a trice stood smiling in his own despatch.

"Or a better knave than I thought you, Bunny, and, by Jove, it's the knave! Well—I suppose I'm fairly drawn; I give you best, as they say out there. As a matter of fact, I've been thinking of the thing myself; last night's racket reminds me of it in one or two respects. I tell you what, though, this is an occasion, in any case, and I'm going to celebrate it by breaking the one good rule of my life. I'm going to have a second drink!"

The whisky tinkled, the siphon fizzed, the ice plopped home; and seated there in his pajamas, with the inevitable cigarette, Raffles told me the story that I had given up hoping to hear. The windows were wide open; the sounds of Piccadilly floated in at first. Long before he finished, the last wheels had rattled, the last brawler was removed, we alone broke the quiet of the summer night.

"No, they do you very well, indeed. You pay for nothing but drinks, so to speak, but I'm afraid mine were of a comprehensive character. I had started in a hole; I ought really to have refused the invitation; then we all went to the Melbourne Cup, and I had the certain winner that didn't win, and that's not the only way you can play the fool in Melbourne. I wasn't the steady old stager I am now, Bunny; my analysis was a confession in itself. But the others didn't know how hard up I was, and I swore they shouldn't. I tried the Jews, but they're extra fly out there.

"Then I thought of a kinsman of sorts—a second cousin of my father's whom none of us knew anything about, except that he was supposed to be in one or other of the colonies. If he was a rich man, well and good! I would work him; if not, there would be no harm done. I tried to get on his tracks, and, as luck would have it, I succeeded—or thought I had—at the very moment when I happened to have a few days to myself. I was cut over on the hand, just before the big Christmas match, and couldn't have bowled a ball if they had played me.

"The surgeon who fixed me up happened to ask me if I was any relation to Raffles of the National Bank, and the pure luck of it almost took my breath away. A relation who was a high official in one of the banks, who would finance me on my mere name—could anything be better? I made up my mind that this Raffles was the man I wanted, and was awfully sold to find next moment that he wasn't a high official at all. Nor had the doctor so much as met him, but had merely read of him in connection with a small sensation at the suburban branch which my namesake managed; an armed robber had been rather pluckily beaten off, with a bullet in him, by this Raffles; and the sort of thing was so common out there that this was the first I had heard of it! A suburban branch—my financier had faded into some excellent fellow with a billet to lose if he called his soul his own. Still a manager was a manager, and I said I would soon see whether this was the relative I was looking for, if he would be good enough to give me the name of that branch.

"'I'll do more,' says the doctor. 'I'll get you the name of the branch he's been promoted to, for I think I heard they'd moved him up one already.' And the next day he brought me the name of the township of Yea, some

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fifty miles north of Melbourne; but, with the vagueness which characterized all his information, he was unable to say whether I should find my relative there or not.

"He's a single man, and his initials are W. F.," said the doctor, who was certain enough of the immaterial points. "He left his old post several days ago, but it appears he's not due at the new one till the New Year. No doubt he'll go before then to take things over and settle in. You might find him up there and you might not. If I were you, I should write."

"That'll lose two days," said I, "and more if he isn't there," for I'd grown quite keen on this up-country manager, and I felt that, if I could get at him while the holidays were still on, a little conviviality might help matters considerably.

"Then," said the doctor, "I should get a quiet horse and ride. You needn't use that hand."

"Can't I go by train?"

"You can and you can't. You would still have to ride. I suppose you're a horseman?"

"Yes."

"Then I should certainly ride all the way. It's a delightful road, through Whittlesea and over the Plenty Ranges. It'll give you some idea of the bush, Mr. Raffles, and you'll see the sources of the water supply of this city, sir. You'll see where every drop of it comes from—the pure Yan Yean! I wish I had time to ride with you."

"But where can I get a horse?"

"The doctor thought a moment.

"I've a mare of my own that's as fat as butter for want of work," said he. "It would be a charity to me to sit on her back for a hundred miles or so, and then I should know you'd have no temptation to use that hand."

"You're far too good!" I protested.

"You're A. J. Raffles," he said.

"And if ever there was a prettier

compliment, or a finer instance of even colonial hospitality, I can only say, Bunny, that I never heard of either."

He sipped his whisky, threw away the stump of his cigarette, and lit another before continuing.

"Well, I managed to write a line to W. F. with my own hand, which, as you will gather, was not very badly wounded; it was simply this third finger that was split and in splints; and next morning the doctor packed me off on a bovine beast that would have done for an ambulance. Half the team came up to see me start; the rest were rather sick with me for not stopping to see the match out, as if I could help them to win by watching them. They little knew the game I'd got on myself, but still less did I know the game I was going to play.

"It was an interesting ride enough, especially after passing the place called Whittlesea, a real wild township on the lower slope of the ranges, where I recollect having a deadly meal of hot mutton and tea, with the thermometer at three figures in the shade. The first thirty miles or so was a good metal road, too good to go half round the world to ride on, but after Whittlesea it was a mere track over the ranges—a track I often couldn't see and left entirely to the mare. Now it dipped into a gully and ran through a creek, and all the time the local color was inches thick: gum trees galore and parrots all colors of the rainbow. In one place a whole forest of gums had been ring-barked, and were just as though they had been painted white, without a leaf or a living thing for miles. And the first living thing I did meet was the sort to give you the creeps; it was a riderless horse coming full tilt through the bush, with the saddle twisted round and the stirrup irons ringing. Without thinking, I had a shot at heading him with the doctor's mare, and blocked

him just enough to allow a man who came galloping after to do the rest.

"Thank ye, mister," growled the man—a huge chap in a red-checked shirt, with a beard like W. G. Grace, but the very devil of an expression.

"Been an accident?" said I, reining up.

"Yes," said he, scowling as though he defied me to ask any more.

"And a nasty one," I said, 'if that's blood on the saddle!'

"Well, Bunney, I may be a black-guard myself, but I don't think I ever looked at a fellow as that chap looked at me. But I stared him out, and forced him to admit that it was blood on the twisted saddle, and after that he became quite tame. He told me exactly what had happened. A mate of his had been dragged under a branch, and had his nose smashed, but that was all; had sat tight after it till he dropped from loss of blood; another mate was with him back in the bush.

"As I've said already, Bunney, I wasn't the old stager that I am now—in any respect—and we parted good enough friends. He asked me which way I was going, and, when I told him, he said I should save seven miles, and get a good hour earlier to Yea, by striking off the track and making for a peak that we could see through the trees, and following a creek that I should see from the peak. Don't smile, Bunney! I began by saying I was a child in those days. Of course the short cut was the long way round; and it was nearly dark when that unlucky mare and I saw the single street of Yea.

"I was looking for the bank when a fellow in a white suit ran down from a veranda.

"Mr. Raffles?" said he.

"Mr. Raffles!" said I, laughing as I shook his hand.

"You're late."

"I was misdirected."

"That's all? I'm relieved," he said. "Do you know what they are saying? There are some brand-new bush-rangers on the road between Whittlesea and this—a second Kelly gang! They'd have caught a Tartar in you, eh?"

"They would in you," I retorted, and my *tu quoque* shut him up and seemed to puzzle him. Yet there was much more sense in it than in his compliment to me, which was absolutely pointless.

"I'm afraid you'll find things pretty rough," he resumed, when he had unstrapped my valise, and handed my reins to his man. "It's lucky you're a bachelor like myself."

"I could not quite see the point of this remark, either, since, had I been married, I should hardly have sprung my wife upon him in this free-and-easy fashion. I muttered the conventional sort of thing, and then he said I should find it all right when I settled, as though I had come to graze upon him for weeks! 'Well,' thought I, 'these colonials do take the cake for hospitality!' And, still marveling, I let him lead me into the private part of the bank.

"Dinner will be ready in a quarter of an hour," said he as we entered. "I thought you might like a tub first, and you'll find all ready in the room at the end of the passage. Sing out if there's anything you want. Your luggage hasn't turned up yet, by the way, but here's a letter that came this morning."

"Not for me?"

"Yes; didn't you expect one?"

"I certainly did not!"

"Well, here it is."

"And, as he lit me to my room, I read my own superscription of the previous day—to, W. F. Raffles!

"Bunney, you've had your wind bagged at footer, I dare say; you know what that's like? All I can say is that my moral wind was bagged by that letter as I hope, old chap, I have never yet bagged yours. I couldn't speak. I

could only stand with my own letter in my hands until he had the good taste to leave me by myself.

"W. F. Raffles! We had mistaken *each other* for W. F. Raffles—for the new manager who had not yet arrived! Small wonder we had conversed at cross-purposes! The only wonder was that we had not discovered our mutual mistake. How the other man would have laughed! But I—I could not laugh. By Jove, no, it was no laughing matter for me! I saw the whole thing in a flash, without a tremor, but with the direct depression from my own single point of view. Call it callous if you like, Bunny, but remember that I was in much the same hole as you've since been in yourself, and that I had counted on this W. F. Raffles even as you counted on A. J. I thought of the man with the W. G. beard—the riderless horse with the bloody saddle—the deliberate misdirection that had put me off the track and out of the way—and now the missing manager and the report of bushrangers at this end. But I simply don't pretend to have felt any personal pity for a man whom I had never seen; that kind of pity's usually cant; and besides, all mine was needed for myself.

"I was in as big a hole as ever. What the devil was I to do? I doubt if I have sufficiently impressed upon you the absolute necessity of my returning to Melbourne in funds. As a matter of fact, it was less the necessity than my own determination which I can truthfully describe as absolute.

"Money I would have—but how—but how? Would this stranger be open to persuasion—if I told him the truth? No; that would set us all scouring the country for the rest of the night. Why should I tell him? Suppose I left him to find out his mistake, would anything be gained? Bunny, I give you my word that I went in to dinner without a definite intention in my head, or one

premeditated lie upon my lips. I might do the decent, natural thing, and explain matters without loss of time; on the other hand, there was no hurry. I had not opened the letter, and could always pretend I had not noticed the initials; meanwhile something might turn up. I could wait a little and see. Tempted I already was, but as yet the temptation was vague, and its very vagueness made me tremble.

"'Bad news, I'm afraid?' said the manager, when at last I sat down at his table.

"'A mere annoyance,' I answered—I do assure you—on the spur of the moment and nothing else. But my lie was told; my position was taken; from that moment onward there was no retreat. By implication, without realizing what I was doing, I had already declared myself W. F. Raffles. Therefore, W. F. Raffles I would be, in that bank, for that night. And the devil teach me how to use my lie!"

Again he raised his glass to his lips—I had forgotten mine. His cigarette case caught the gaslight as he handed it to me. I shook my head without taking my eyes from his.

"The devil played up," continued Raffles, with a laugh. "Before I tasted my soup I had decided what to do. I had determined to rob that bank instead of going to bed, and to be back in Melbourne for breakfast if the doctor's mare could do it. I would tell the old fellow that I had missed my way and been bushed for hours, as I easily might have been, and had never got to Yea at all. At Yea, on the other hand, the personation and robbery would ever after be attributed to a member of the gang that had waylaid and murdered the new manager with that very object. You are acquiring some experience in such matters, Bunny. I ask you, was there ever a better get-out? Last night's was

something like it, only never such a certainty. And I saw it from the beginning—saw to the end before I had finished my soup!

"To increase my chances, the cashier, who also lived in the bank, was away over the holidays—had actually gone down to Melbourne to see us play; and the man who had taken my horse also waited at table; for he and his wife were the only servants, and they slept in a separate building. You may depend I ascertained this before we had finished dinner. Indeed I was by way of asking too many questions—the most oblique and delicate was that which elicited my host's name, Ewbank—nor was I careful enough to conceal their drift.

"Do you know," said this fellow Ewbank, who was one of the downright sort, 'if it wasn't you, I should say you were in a funk of robbers? Have you lost your nerve?'

"I hope not," said I, turning jolly hot, I can tell you; 'but—well, it's not a pleasant thing to have to put a bullet through a fellow!'

"No?" said he coolly. 'I should enjoy nothing better, myself; besides, yours didn't go through.'

"I wish it had! I was smart enough to cry.

"Amen!" said he.

"And I emptied my glass; actually I did not know whether my wounded bank robber was in prison, dead, or at large!

"But, now that I had had more than enough of it, Ewbank would come back to the subject. He admitted that the staff was small; but as for himself, he had a loaded revolver under his pillow all night, under the counter all day, and he was only waiting for his chance.

"Under the counter, eh?" I was ass enough to say.

"Yes; so had you!"

"He was looking at me in surprise, and something told me that to say, 'Of

course—I had forgotten!' would have been quite fatal, considering what I was supposed to have done. So I looked down my nose and shook my head.

"But the papers said you had!" he cried.

"Not under the counter," said I.

"But it's the regulation!"

"For the moment, Bunny, I felt stumped, though I trust I only looked more superior than before, and I think I justified my look.

"The regulation!" I said at length, in the most offensive tone at my command. 'Yes, the regulation would have us all dead men! My dear sir, do you expect your bank robber to let you reach for your gun in the place where he knows it's kept? I had mine in my pocket, and I got my chance by retreating from the counter with all visible reluctance.'

"Ewbank stared at me with open eyes and a five-barred forehead; then down came his fist on the table.

"By Heaven! that was smart! Still," he added, like a man who would not be in the wrong, 'the papers said the other thing, you know!'

"Of course," I rejoined, 'because they said what I told them. You wouldn't have had me advertise the fact that I improved upon the bank's regulations, would you?'

"So that cloud rolled over, and by Jove it was a cloud with a golden lining! Not silver—real good Australian gold! For old Ewbank hadn't quite appreciated me till then; he was a hard nut, a much older man than myself, and I felt pretty sure he thought me young for the place, and my supposed feat a fluke. But I never saw a man change his mind more openly. He got out his best brandy, he made me throw away the cigar I was smoking, and opened a fresh box. He was a convivial-looking party, with a red mustache, and a very humorous face—not unlike Tom Emmett's—and from that moment I laid

myself out to attack him on his convivial flank. But he wasn't a Rosenthal, Bunny; he had a treble-seamed, hand-sewn head, and could have drunk me under the table ten times over.

"All right," I thought, "you may go to bed sober, but you'll sleep like a timber yard!" And I threw half he gave me through the open window, when he wasn't looking.

"But he was a good chap, Ewbank, and don't you imagine he was at all intemperate. Convivial I called him, and I only wish he had been something more. He did, however, become more and more genial as the evening advanced, and I had not much difficulty in getting him to show me round the bank at what was really an unearthly hour for such a proceeding. It was when he went to fetch the revolver before turning in. I kept him out of his bed another twenty minutes, and I knew every inch of the business premises before I shook hands with Ewbank in my room.

"You won't guess what I did with myself for the next hour. I undressed and went to bed. The incessant strain involved in even the most deliberate impersonation is the most wearing thing I know; then how much more so when the impersonation is impromptu! There's no getting your eye in; the next word may bowl you out; it's batting in a bad light all through. I haven't told you of half the tight places I was in during a conversation that ran into hours and became dangerously intimate toward the end. You can imagine them for yourself, and then picture me spread out on my bed, getting my second wind for the big deed of the night.

"Once more I was in luck, for I had not been lying there long before I heard my dear Ewbank snoring like a harmonium, and the music never ceased for a moment; it was as loud as ever when I crept out and closed my door behind me, as regular as ever when I

stopped to listen at his. And I have still to hear the concert that I shall enjoy much more. The good fellow snored me out of the bank, and was still snoring when I again stood and listened under his open window.

"Why did I leave the bank first? To catch and saddle the mare and tether her in a clump of trees close by: to have the means of escape nice and handy before I went to work. I have often wondered at the instinctive wisdom of the precaution; unconsciously I was acting on what has been one of my guiding principles ever since. Pains and patience were required. I had to get my saddle without waking the man, and I was not used to catching horses in a horse paddock. Then I distrusted the poor mare, and I went back to the stables for a hatful of oats, which I left with her in the clump, hat and all. There was a dog, too, to reckon with—our very worst enemy, Bunny; but I had been cute enough to make immense friends with him during the evening; and he wagged his tail, not only when I came downstairs, but when I reappeared at the back door.

"As the *soi-disant* new manager, I had been able, in the most ordinary course, to pump poor Ewbank about anything and everything connected with the working of the bank, especially in those twenty last invaluable minutes before turning in. And I had made a very natural point of asking him where he kept, and would recommend me to keep, the keys at night. Of course I thought he would take them with him to his room; but no such thing; he had a dodge worth two of that. What it was doesn't much matter, but no outsider would have found those keys in a month of Sundays.

"I, of course, had them in a few seconds, and in a few more I was in the strong room itself. I forgot to say that the moon had risen and was letting quite a lot of light into the bank. I

had, however, brought a bit of candle with me from my room; and in the strong room, which was down some narrow stairs behind the counter in the banking chamber, I had no hesitation in lighting it. There was no window down there, and, though I could no longer hear old Ewbank snoring, I had not the slightest reason to anticipate disturbance from that quarter. I did think of locking myself in while I was at work, but, thank goodness, the iron door had no keyhole on the inside.

"Well, there were heaps of gold in the safe, but I only took what I needed and could comfortably carry, not much more than a couple of hundred altogether. Not a note would I touch, and my native caution came out also in the way I divided the sovereigns between all my pockets, and packed them up so that I shouldn't be like the old woman of Banbury Cross. Well, you think me too cautious still, but I was insantly cautious then. And so it was that, just as I was ready to go, whereas I might have been gone ten minutes, there came a violent knocking at the outer door.

"Bunny, it was the outer door of the banking chamber! My candle must have been seen! And there I stood, with the grease running hot over my fingers, in that brick grave of a strong room!

"There was only one thing to be done. I must trust to the sound sleeping of Ewbank upstairs, open the door myself, knock the visitor down, or shoot him with the revolver I had been new chum enough to buy before leaving Melbourne, and make a dash for that clump of trees and the doctor's mare. My mind was made up in an instant, and I was at the top of the strong-room stairs, the knocking still continuing, when a second sound drove me back. It was the sound of bare feet coming along a corridor.

"My narrow stair was stone, I tumbled down it with little noise, and

had only to push open the iron door, for I had left the keys in the safe. As I did so I heard a handle turn overhead, and thanked my gods that I had shut every single door behind me. You see, old chap, one's caution doesn't always let one in!

"'Who's that knocking?' said Ewbank up above.

"I could not make out the answer, but it sounded to me like the irrelevant supplication of a spent man. What I did hear, plainly, was the cocking of the bank revolver before the bolts were shot back. Then, a tottering step, a hard, short, shallow breathing, and Ewbank's voice in horror—

"'My God! Good Lord! What's happened to you? You're bleeding like a pig!'

"'Not now,' came with a grateful sort of sigh.

"'But you have been! What's done it?'

"'Bushrangers.'

"'Down the road?'

"'This and Whittlesea—tied to tree—cock shots—left me—bleed to death—escaped—'

"The weak voice failed, and the bare feet bolted. Now was my time—if the poor devil had fainted. But I could not be sure, and there I crouched down below in the dark, at the half-shut iron door, not less spellbound than imprisoned. It was just as well, for Ewbank wasn't gone a minute.

"'Drink this,' I heard him say, and, when the other spoke again, his voice was stronger.

"'Now I begin to feel alive—'

"'Don't talk!'

"'It does me good. You don't know what it was, all those miles alone, one an hour at the outside! I never thought I should come through. You must let me tell you—in case I don't!'

"'Well, have another sip.'

"'Thank you! I said bushrangers;

of course, there are no such things nowadays.'

"What were they, then?"

"Bank thieves; the one that had the pot shots was the very brute I drove out of the bank at Coburg, with a bullet in him!"

"I knew it!"

"Of course you did, Bunny; so did I, down in that strong room; but old Ewbank didn't, and I thought he was never going to speak again.

"You're delirious," he says at last. 'Who in blazes do you think you are?'

"The new manager.'

"The new manager's in bed and asleep upstairs!"

"When did he arrive?"

"This evening."

"Call himself Raffles?"

"Yes."

"Well, I'm damned!" whispered the real man. 'I thought it was just revenge, but now I see what it was. My dear sir, the man upstairs is an impostor—if he's upstairs still! He must be one of the gang. He's going to rob the bank—if he hasn't done so already!'

"If he hasn't done so already!" muttered Ewbank after him. 'If he's upstairs still! By God, if he is, I'm sorry for him!'

"His tone was quiet enough, but about the nastiest I ever heard. I tell you, Bunny, I was glad I'd brought that revolver. It looked as though it must be mine against his, muzzle to muzzle.

"Better have a look down here, first," said the new manager.

"While he gets through his window? No, no, he's not down here."

"It's easy to have a look."

"Bunny, if you ask me what was the most thrilling moment of my infamous career, I say it was that moment. There I stood at the bottom of those narrow stone stairs, inside the strong room, with the door a good foot open, and I didn't know whether it would creak or

not. The light was coming nearer—and I didn't know! I had to chance it. And it didn't creak a bit; it was far too solid and well hung; and I couldn't have banged it if I'd tried—it was too heavy; and it fitted so close that I felt and heard the air squeeze out in my face. Every shred of light went out, except the streak underneath, and it brightened. How I blessed that door!

"No, he's not down *there*," I heard as though through cotton wool; then the streak went out, too, and in a few seconds I ventured to open once more, and was in time to hear them creeping to my room.

"Well, now there was not a fifth of a second to be lost; but I'm proud to say I came up those stairs on my toes and fingers, and out of that bank—they'd gone and left the door open—just as gingerly as though my time had been my own. I didn't even forget to put on the hat that the doctor's mare was eating her oats out of, as well as she could with a bit, or it alone would have landed me. I didn't even gallop away, but just jogged off quietly in the thick dust at the side of the road—though I own my heart was galloping—and thanked my stars the bank was at that end of the township, in which I really hadn't set foot. The very last thing I heard was the two managers raising Cain and the coachman. And now, Bunny——"

He stood up and stretched himself, with a smile that ended in a yawn. The black windows had faded through every shade of indigo; they now framed their opposite neighbors, stark and livid in the dawn; and the gas seemed turned to nothing in the globes.

"But that's not all?" I cried.

"I'm sorry to say it is," said Raffles apologetically. "The thing should have ended with an exciting chase, I know, but somehow it didn't. I suppose they thought I had got no end of a start; then they had made up their minds that

I belonged to the gang, which was not so many miles away; and one of them had got as much as he could carry from that gang as it was. But I wasn't to know all that, and I'm bound to say that there was plenty of excitement left for me. Lord, how I made that poor brute travel when I got among the trees! Though we must have made it over fifty miles from Melbourne, we had done it at a snail's pace; and those stolen oats had brisked the old girl up to such a pitch that she fairly bolted when she felt her nose turned south. By Jove, it was no joke, in and out among those trees, and under branches with your face in the mane! I told you about the forest of dead gums? It looked perfectly ghostly in the moonlight. And I found it as still as I had left it—so still that I pulled up there, my first halt, and lay with my ear to the ground for two or three minutes. But I heard nothing—not a thing but the mare's bellow and my own heart. I'm sorry, Bunny; but if ever you write my memoirs, you won't have any difficulty in working up that chase. Play those dead gum trees for all they're worth, and let the bullets fly like hail. I'll turn round in my saddle to see Ew-

bank coming up hell-to-leather in his white suit, and I'll duly paint it red. Do it in the third person, and they won't know how it's going to end."

"But I don't know myself," I complained. "Did the mare carry you all the way back to Melbourne?"

"Every rod, pole or perch! I had her well seen to at our hotel, and returned her to the doctor in the evening. He was tremendously tickled to hear I had been bushed; next morning he brought me the paper to show me what I had escaped at Yea!"

"Without suspecting anything?"

"Ah!" said Raffles, as he put out the gas; "that's a point on which I've never made up my mind. The mare and her color was a coincidence—luckily she was only a bay—and I fancy the condition of the beast must have told a tale. The doctor's manner was certainly different. I'm inclined to think he suspected something, though not the right thing. I wasn't expecting him, and I fear my appearance may have increased his suspicions."

I asked him why.

"I used to have rather a heavy mustache," said Raffles, "but I lost it the day after I lost my innocence."



UPON JULIA'S CLOTHES

WHEN as in silks my Julia goes,
Then, then, methinks, how sweetly flows
That liquefaction of her clothes.
Next, when I cast mine eyes, and see
That brave vibration each way free,
Oh, how that glittering taketh me!

Robert Herrick.

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The Purely Synthetic Beauty

BEAUTY, once upon a time, was something that one had or didn't have. The girl who had it thanked Allah or Krishna and married a man who could buy her all the ankle bracelets in the bazaar. The girl who didn't, humbly made way for the lovely one and hoped for better luck in her next incarnation.

But so far has the art of plastic surgery advanced, and so far has the cosmetic phobia retreated, that practically any girl can elect herself a beauty if she tries hard enough.



Any competent gymnasium can take a figure that slouches along on a rubber-hose spine and return it a few months later set up on a strong, flexible frame that neither wilts in weakness nor goes to the other extreme of ungraceful rigidity.



In these days of henna and marcel's and permanent waves, improvement of the hair is such a simple thing that straight, dusty-looking locks are excusable only if the lady who owns them is lost on the desert plateau of Tibet. If the young lady wants her new beauty in a hurry, she can buy a whole set of long, sweeping eyelashes all ready to paste along the edge of the real ones. Naturally she must give careful attention to pasting the strips on straight and tight. It is one thing for a charming young lady to drop her eyelashes, but quite another to drop them in the soup.



Proceeding a step or so downward, we come to the synthetic beauty's nose. No matter whether it be long as a lighthouse or flat as a saddle, a skillful facial surgeon can turn it into something that looks as if it were transplanted from one of the Three Graces.



There is no need to tell what a would-be beauty can do with her complexion, for the chances are that she has already done it. A girl with rough, sallow skin is as rare nowadays as a pair of lace mitts. If she is thoroughly dissatisfied with the covering of her face, she can have herself scientifically skinned and proceed to grow a new one.



Thus, with the aid of catgut and colored dust, and with a surgeon wielding a saw instead of a fairy godmother waving a wand, the girl of to-day can make herself into a fair imitation of a beauty.

Unfortunately, however, plastic surgery has not yet shown a way to cut down a too-prominent ego, or to smooth off the high spots of an uneven disposition.—*Elsie McCormick, in The New York World.*

By
Channing Pollock
Author of *The Crowded Hour*



The
Coming of Spring

A PUNGENT odor of fried steak and onions ascended the stairs of Mrs. Tierney's theatrical boarding house. Boarding-house odors, like love, may be said to laugh at locksmiths, and no closed door in the building which Mrs. Tierney called her "pension" was proof against this perfume.

"Hurry up, Mamie!" exclaimed Sam Miller, who, with the better half of the acrobatic team of Miller & Miller, occupied the second floor front. "Hurry up! Dinner's 'most ready!"

Undisturbed by this olfactory reminder, the "female basso" next door went on practicing a ballad about to be added to her repertoire. "'They moaned,' you said, 'the death of spring,'" she thundered, "but spring still lived for you and me."

"Gee!" quoth a lady visitor, calling on Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Perkins, sketch artists, in the third floor back. "I don't see how you stand that racket! It'd drive me crazy!"

"We're used to it," replied Clara Perkins, smiling wanly from the folding bed in the corner. "She hasn't had an engagement since January."

"You get used to anything, I guess," responded the lady visitor. Her name was Vivian Ross, and she was pretty. "You'll let me know about rehearsals, Mr. Perkins. It's hard luck being laid up all this time, but don't you worry. Cherries'll soon be ripe!"

"What do you think of her, Clara?" inquired Mr. Perkins five minutes later. "Did she tire you much?"

"She's awfully good looking, isn't she?" returned Mrs. Perkins.

"The peach they put on top of the basket!" observed her husband, with masculinely stupid enthusiasm.

"Yes, she's awfully good looking," repeated the wife. "Too good looking, almost."

"Nonsense! We've got to have a pretty girl to play *Molly*. You know

how much that counts with audiences in vaudeville."

"I know," sighed Mrs. Perkins. She lifted a long, transparent hand and pushed the hair back from her eyes. "Maybe it's just as well that I was taken sick, Joe. Sometimes I think they'd got kind o' tired of seeing me year after year in the same sketch, and—I'm not as young as I used to be."

"Neither am I," observed Joe, with spirit.

"That don't count. When a man gets gray back of the ear he's a *matinée* idol; when a woman does, she's a has-been."

"You're talking foolishness!" said Mr. Perkins. "Our act always went, didn't it? Nine seasons in the same sketch and we've never been farther up than sixth or seventh on the bill. We've always had a full stage, haven't we? Nobody ever asked us to do our turn in one. What do you want for dinner to-night, Clara?"

The female basso on the second floor brought her ballad to an end for the third time. "Where love is there's always spring," she sang. Mr. Perkins fished in his pocket for a bit of paper and brought out a soiled envelope. On the back of this he scrawled the few articles of diet that appealed to his invalid spouse. A plate of soup—"I hope it hasn't cabbage in it to-night," said Mrs. Perkins—a little steak, and a glass of milk.

"I'll have it sent up as soon as Maggie gets through with the table," her husband promised.

He sat down at the bureau to write a few lines to a friend in Chicago. Considering that his stock in trade was a certain gentlemanly suavity, the actor seemed greatly perturbed. Mr. Perkins' singular interest in his new partner had made him nervous.

"Dinner's late again," he remarked. "Nothing's ever on time in this house!"

"I can't help being sorry that some-

body else is going to play *Molly*," came from the folding bed. "I had hoped we'd always work together. We always have."

"You can't work when you're sick, can you?" inquired the sketch artist.

Mrs. Perkins said nothing. Two great big tears, twin children of sorrow, were born in her eyes, and trickled down her cheeks. She wiped them away with her hand, and held her breath to keep from sobbing, but two others followed, and then two more. The covers over her bosom trembled ominously.

"I've waited for you all winter, Clara," Mr. Perkins continued, a note of apology underlying the roughness of his voice. "We're not related to the Vanderbilts, you know! I owe everybody in town now, and it's ridiculous when you think that we might be getting a hundred and fifty a week. Spring is coming, and if I don't hustle there'll be nothing doing till fall. This girl'll do all right for the rest of the season, and you and me can go out together as soon as the parks close."

Still Mrs. Perkins said nothing.

"I wonder if we're going to get any dinner to-night! It's twenty minutes after six."

There was a long silence. The clock on the bureau ticked merrily, the odor of steak grew stronger, the female basso struck the preliminary bars of "The Rosary."

"I'm a terrible goose," Mrs. Perkins flung into the stillness; "but we've never been like other people in this business, Joe. Most of 'em change partners as if they was waltzing. Those Millers downstairs have been married three times apiece. I never wanted any other man, Joe, and you——"

"I never saw anybody else that made any great hit with me."

"When we got married I had some looks myself," went on Mrs. Perkins. "The newspapers printed a lot of my

pictures. I'm not as young as I used to be!"

"You're no candidate for an old ladies' home—not yet!"

"I've faded out some," Mrs. Perkins went on. "It's hard work doing the twice-a-day and a new town every week. I didn't mind it, because we was together. It's terribly lonely unless you've somebody to turn to. That's how we got—got sentimental. Do you remember? You signed me to play *Molly*. 'You've got to have a pretty girl to play *Molly*,' you said to me, just like you said to-day. So we went out to Chicago and opened at the Hay-market. After that we went on the Orpheum Circuit."

"We got three hundred a week that first season," commented Mr. Perkins wistfully.

"We was together quite a lot—we had to be. Twice a day at the theater, and then there was the railway jumps, and often we had dinner and supper together. There wasn't anybody else for you to fall in love with, Joe, and so—well, that was nine years ago. There's some difference in a woman between being twenty-six and being thirty-five. Sickness don't help any, either, I can tell you. I don't think I ever noticed it as much as I did to-day—when Miss Ross was sitting there by the bureau."

"A man don't have to get stuck on a girl just because they're acting together!" exclaimed Mr. Perkins.

"No," agreed the woman in the folding bed. "He don't have to."

The raucous note of the dinner bell clanged in the hall below. It was followed by the sound of many voices.

"Hello!" cried the female basso. She had fairly run into the Miller. "You'll have to get a move on if you do your turn to-night!"

"Oh, it's only up the street," returned Mr. Miller.

Mr. Perkins put on his coat. He had taken it off to write. He wrote more easily in his shirt sleeves.

"If Annie had only lived," said Mrs. Perkins, "she'd 'a' been a lot of company to me while you was away. She looked like you, too. We'll be all broken up, won't we—you on the road, and me here, and Annie lyin' way out there in Salt Lake. How time flies! It don't seem six months ago that we was holding hands in that little graveyard, and it's more than that many years. You called me a child-mother, do you remember? You wouldn't call me a child now, I guess."

"You're a worse child than you ever was!" exclaimed Mr. Perkins. "And you're prettier, too." He walked over to the folding bed and pressed the thin hand lying on the coverlet. "You're prettier to me."

"Joe!" said Mrs. Perkins. "Joe!" She swallowed something hard in her throat. "Joe, you'll be late to dinner."

"I don't care," he replied. "I'm going to mail this postal card first, anyway. It's to Miss Ross. She'd better look for another engagement, I guess. I'm going to do a monologue."

He went down the hall, singing the new song of the female basso. "Where love is there's always spring," he sang, two full notes off the key.

Mrs. Perkins no longer held her breath. There was nothing to prevent her sobbing—now.



Who can doubt whether we are in the world for anything else than to love? In fact, we conceal in vain, we always love. In the very things from which love seems to have been separated, it is found secretly, and under seal, and man could not live a moment without this.—*Pascal*.

By
Rafael Sabatini
Author of: *Scaramonche*



The
Fortunes of Lal Faversham
V Carolus and Caroline

IT was on a Saturday early in August of the year of His Majesty's blessed restoration that court and town alike were set agog by the news that Sir Charles Sedley had that morning been caned in Hyde Park.

The King was gone by water to the Tower to dine with Sir John Robinson, the lieutenant, and having naught to keep me at Whitehall I went forth to seek for more news of this incredible affair, and to learn at whose hands and for what sins the gallant Sedley had suffered this chastisement. I took Dick Talbot with me, and in the Rhenish wine house we came upon a company of gentlemen—some four or five there may have been—whose tongues were wagging noisily upon the very business whereon we sought enlightenment, yet who knew no more of it than did we. Anon, however, we were joined by that buffoon Killigrew, who was better informed—as, indeed, he was in all matters, from the rascally habit he had

taken of thrusting his lean old nose into the business of his neighbors.

"Gentlemen," quoth he, "I make no doubt that you have heard that a caning was administered this morning to the gay Sedley?"

"Heard of it?" cried Falmouth. "Why, 'tis the talk of the town."

"H'm!" sneered Killigrew, twirling his gray mustachios, "the town talks much, and like all who talk much knowing little, it lies much. Gentlemen, let me scatter the mist of falsehood that envelops you. Sir Charles was not caned in Hyde Park this morning—nor, for that matter, anywhere else at any time, so far as my knowledge reaches."

"Go your ways, Tom," said Denham. "What jest have you brought us?"

"Jest! Oddslife, 'tis no jest. Shall I tell you what really befell? Lend me your ears then. There is at the Cockpit Theater a handsome young dog of an actor lately hoisted into fame by his

playing in 'The Loyal Subject,' who is well known to all of you. I speak of Ned Kynaston. You may have remarked that of late he hath cut a brave figure abroad, in clothes that are closely copied from those worn by Sir Charles—whose taste in such matters is beyond compare. Sedley hath noticed this, and being for all his wit the vainest puppy in England, he hath conceived the notion that Kynaston seeks to pass for him. Incensed by what he deems an unwarrantable presumption, he determined to read the actor a lesson. And thus it befell that when this morning Kynaston was taking the air in the park arrayed in a gorgeous brocaded doublet, the very counterpart of one in which Sir Charles had been seen but two days ago, he was accosted by a burly hireling of Sedley's who addressed him as Sir Charles Sedley. Now, the poor lad hath an unfortunate propensity for a jest, and no sooner did he conceive that by virtue of his coat the fellow had mistaken him for Sedley, than turning, he assumed on the instant the manner of Sir Charles, and demanded the fellow's business. Thereupon, without more ado, the giant takes him by the collar of his brave coat, and sets about belaboring him in merciless fashion. Vainly doth Kynaston yell that there is a mistake, that he is not Sir Charles. His protests do but incense his assailant further, and the more he protests the more is he belabored, the other swearing that he seeks by a falsehood to evade punishment. When at length Kynaston gets his sword out and is like to repay the fellow's attentions with interest, the on-lookers—numbering half a score or so—rush in between and separate them. That, gentlemen, is the truth of what occurred."

There fell a silence upon the company when Killigrew paused, broken at length by Lord Falmouth with the comment that in a measure Kynaston was already

avenged, since 'twas Sedley's reputation was like to suffer.

"Pooh!" cried Killigrew. "Before to-morrow all London will have heard that which I have told you. What say you of it, Lal?"

"Say?" I answered. "That 'tis vastly ill-done, and worthy of none but a fop of Sir Charles Sedley's kidney. You may tell him that Lal Faversham says so," I added, and with that I rose and took my leave of them, full of indignation at what I had learned.

Now, by a curious chance I had not gone far along the Strand when of a sudden I came face to face with Kynaston.

A singularly handsome lad was this actor—who could not at that time have numbered over eighteen years. Slight, graceful, and shapely of figure was he, with a face as noble and as delicately chiseled as any that I have ever seen on either man or woman. He wore a Camlett coat of black with silver lace, sober and simple, yet of an elegance that heightened his distinguished air. Actor though he was, I'll swear no courtlier figure might you see at Whitehall.

"Whither away, Ned?" was my greeting.

"Give you good-day, Sir Lionel," he answered, with a graceful bow. "You have heard of this morning's affair?"

"Even now, from Mr. Killigrew, and rat me but 'twas a cowardly business."

He laughed softly and pointed with a heavy riding whip that he carried to a house across the street, bearing the sign of The Dolphin.

"Sir Charles Sedley is in that house," said he, "and if you'll tarry here a while you'll see a reckoning paid and a gentleman carried home to bed." And he shook his whip to make his meaning clear.

"Ned," I cried, aghast, "this is madness!"

My exclamation drew from him a

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recitation of his wrongs in that wondrously melodious voice that moved me as it had moved thousands at the play. Yet when he had done I, too, waxed eloquent, for my sympathies were all with him, and I would not have him do that for which he might be visited with chastisement far heavier than that morning's caning. To such purpose did I talk, and to show him the folly of the step he meditated that in the end I won him to my way, and taking him by the arm, I led him thence to my lodging at Whitehall, where I kept him until the following morning. But for all that when he left me then the boy had abandoned his mad project of horsewhipping Sir Charles, he swore that he would have his reckoning in another coin, and that he would not rest until he had made Charles Sedley the mock of the town.

But days went by, and the affair was forgotten without any further sign from the young actor, or any further allusion of his to Sedley. Meanwhile he was achieving new triumphs at the Cockpit by his wondrous playing of the part of *Lady Macbeth*—for it was not until some months later that women began to play female characters upon a London stage.

Some two weeks after the Hyde Park affair, I received a letter from my old friend, Lord Chesterton, telling me, among other things, that he was newly wed to the loveliest woman in England—Caroline Brentwood. I had known Caroline in the old days, before Naseby was fought, and I recalled the little child of five for whom I had—when a lad of seventeen—made daisy garlands.

The wars had drawn me from my Kentish home, and since then I had not seen her. Twenty years were sped since then, and Caroline must now be a woman of five and twenty, no longer a child, 'tis true, yet too young by at least a generation to be the bride of Chesterton—a widower who counted more than sixty years.

But there was the letter, and the rest was no affair of mine. He added that he hoped soon to present the son of his old friend—my father—to his divine Caroline, since before August was well out he looked to be in London. And indeed I had the news of their arrival but a few days thereafter, and I hastened to the sumptuous house they had taken in Pall Mall, to pay my *devoirs*.

I found Lady Chesterton—to whose beauty, methought upon beholding it, her husband had done no more than justice in this letter—in a state of high distress. She greeted me with the lament that scarce were they arrived than they were overtaken by a courier who had ridden after them posthaste to beg my lord to return forthwith to Allington. His brother had fallen from his horse, and sustained such hurt that the doctor said he would not live above a week.

At length, when she had told me this and I had condoled with her, we had leisure to look at each other, and marvel foolishly at the change that twenty years had wrought in our appearances.

"I am certain that I should have known you, Sir Lionel," said she.

"Madame, your memory does me too much honor."

"Not too much, but more, methinks, than yours doth me."

"What would you, dear Lady Chesterton? Between a pretty child of six and a grown woman of dazzling beauty, there lies a gap which imagination, not memory, must bridge. And yet something of little Caroline I'll swear you have retained, for even as I look at you I find a something in your face that gives bridle to my recollections, and which, did I not know you, would doubtless tax my mind no less than it might tax my heart."

"You have profited by your sojourn in France, Sir Lionel."

Before I could reply, we were interrupted by the advent of Sir John and

Lady Denham, into whose care it would appear that Chesterton had—in a letter penned that morning ere he had set out to return to Allington—commended his young wife.

I took my leave shortly thereafter, and as I went, my thoughts dwelt much upon Caroline Chesterton.

Truly there was little of a country maid about this modishly bedizened beauty. And methought that in character she was like to show as little simplicity as she did in raiment.

Nor was I wrong, yet hardly right, for that which followed was more by far than I would have dared conjecture. Before a week was passed all London rang with talk of Lady Chesterton.

Daily a line of chairs and coaches stood before her house in Pall Mall, and in her antechamber you might swear that you were at Whitehall, such was the crowd of courtiers that stood elbowing one another. All went, and for a season all were alike welcome, and while this endured, danger I felt was slight. But in the end that which I dreaded came to pass. Out of that crowd of courtiers she singled one to be her cavalier. Her choice, methought, could not have been more ill-advised; it fell upon the handsome, dissolute Sedley. 'Twas not his doing; 'twas hers; she drew him on with her ogling, and he, but too willing, fell a victim of it.

Blood and wounds! Here was a pretty course for things to run! The name of my Lord Chesterton's wife on all London's vile lips coupled with that of Charles Sedley.

One evening when the air was warm, although we were in the first days of September, her guests had, after supping, strolled out into the gardens. I had followed, but no farther than the porch where I stood leaning, watching the gay scene—for the place had been prettily illuminated—and wondering how soon Chesterton would return to put an end to these mad doings. There

was a balcony immediately above my head, and as I stood within the shelter of the porch, a murmur of voices was wafted down to me. At first either that murmur was indistinct or else was my mind bent on other matters, but presently the word "Caroline" smote my ears, and the voice that uttered it was Sedley's.

"Release my hand, Sir Charles," came the answer. "You forget that I have a husband."

"I wish the devil had him, instead, sweet Caroline. Why remind me of that gout-ridden parcel of dotage and senility to whom they have fettered you? What is he to us, sweet Caroline? We who——"

"Sir Charles," she broke in, angrily, "you are speaking of the man in whose house you stand—of Lord Chesterton, my husband."

"D—n your husband, madame!"

In their excitement they had both flung prudence to the winds and sought no longer to restrain their voices.

"Release my hand!"

"Caroline, your lowly slave obeys your cruel law, but first doth homage to the peerless hand for whose release you clamor."

There came the soft smack of a kiss, followed by another and yet another, and lastly by a smack of another fashion—the loud, crackling smack of a buffet.

"Let that help you to better manners in the future, Sir Charles."

"Perdition!" I heard him snarl, then thinking that perchance my services might be required, I turned and went within. On the stairs I met my Lady Chesterton fanning herself vigorously. She greeted me as airily as if naught had happened, asking me why I moped there while the others made merry in the garden.

"Madame," said I, in an undertone, "by chance I overheard your conversation on the balcony with Sedley. Your

husband is not here to punish insolence, but if you'll grant me leave I'll take his place, and none shall know the cause."

She gave me a curious glance, and growing of a sudden very serious, she stood before me with knitted brows and fingers plucking at the fan on which her eyes were bent.

"Men say, Sir Lionel," murmured she at length, "that you play as pretty a sword as any man in England."

"Such as it is, madame, it is at your service. Say that you wish it so and I'll pick a quarrel with this puppy Sedley ere the night is out. The cut of his coat will serve for a cause."

She pondered for a moment.

"If you think——" she began, then checked herself, and broke into a laugh. "No, no, Sir Lionel, I will not have it so. Forget what you have heard. Sedley," she added, spreading her fan before her face and glancing at me coquettishly over the top of it, "hath already suffered punishment."

With that, hearing a step upon the stairs, she fled, and a moment later Sedley descended with one cheek white and the other red.

I went home that night, thinking not only that henceforth Sir Charles was like to be seen no more in her house, but also that none knew of what had passed betwixt them. Before noon next day, however, it was on every lip that Sir Charles Sedley's ears had been boxed by Lady Chesterton—and I was vexed and puzzled to think how it could have got abroad. Before night I heard a lampoon recited in a tavern, entitled "Carolus and Caroline."

I went in the afternoon to Lady Chesterton, but she would not see me, and so I took a turn in the park, where I came by chance upon Kynaston. He began forthwith to talk of Sedley and of last night's affair.

"Rat me, Sir Lionel," he exclaimed, "but I am sorry that Sedley hath been so soon discouraged, for methought that

in this business I saw a way to pay my score."

"For my own part, Ned, I am glad of it. Lord Chesterton was my father's friend, and I would not have dishonor fall upon his white hairs."

"So much was not necessary. It was, in fact, my own design to prevent matters from coming to such a pass as that. But there, Sir Lionel, women are fickle things, and I do not yet despair."

How justified he was in this I realized when on the following night I supped at Lady Chesterton's and found Charles Sedley of the company. And so well received was he by her that I found myself again asking how soon her husband's brother would see fit to get his dying done.

Then one morning the news fell like a thunderbolt that Lady Chesterton had eloped with Sir Charles Sedley.

If I could have come by a miracle into the presence of that dog Sedley, Kynaston's wrongs would have been avenged as well as Chesterton's.

Touching Kynaston, Dick Talbot brought me word that afternoon that he had disappeared, and that a rumor was afloat that he was gone after the runaways. I paid little heed to the matter at the time, but chancing that evening to walk along Pall Mall, I beheld a coach standing before Lord Chesterton's door. The jaded, steaming horses argued that they had come a journey long and swift. I had with me Dick Talbot—in whose company I had left Whitehall—beside Killigrew and young Jermyn, who had since joined us, and no sooner did we set eyes upon that vehicle than we cried out in chorus that Lord Chesterton was returned at last. Conceive, however, our surprise when, as we reached the house, the door opened, and while a lacquey held it for him, out stalked Ned Kynaston.

He hung back in apparent hesitation, and also methought some confusion,

upon beholding us, but I stepped quickly up to him.

"What is this, Ned?" I cried. "They say that you went in pursuit of them. Is this your coach?"

He nodded, and made shift to pass me.

"Well, man," I shouted, "did you overtake them?"

"I did, Sir Lionel. In fact, I have done more. I have prevailed upon Lady Chesterton to return. She is within." And he jerked his thumb in that direction.

"You have done that, Ned! May God bless you!" I cried, wringing his hand.

"Yes, may God bless you, and protect you also, for, rat me, you'll need it when Sedley returns," croaked Killigrew. "Where left you the gallant Charles?"

"At Newark," answered Ned. "But I'll take no credit for the business; I am no protector of love-sick wenches. What I have done I have done not for love of Chesterton, but for hate of Sedley. I swore to make a mock of him, and he himself hath afforded me the means. I knew, gentlemen, of the elopement almost as soon as the pair had started, and also what road they took—how I knew it is too long a story. I followed them in disguise, and I overtook them about noon at Newark. I espied Sedley in the inn yard, and I had the good fortune to find a ruffian who for a brace of broad pieces was willing to fling Sir Charles into the horse pond. I gave him the money, and in the twinkling of an eye he had sent this Don Juan hurtling into the slimy water. Before they had realized at the inn what had befallen, my hireling had vanished, and Sir Charles stood among them, cursing lustily and dripping mud from every ribbon. Next, while the irate Sedley was changing his raiment, I gained access to the lady, and—Well, gentlemen, I am accounted some-

thing of an actor, and the rest was easy. It was a matter of moments to bundle Lady Chesterton into a coach, and here we are returned."

"Oddslife, 'tis the sweetest vengeance I ever heard tell of," was Killigrew's comment.

The story spread like wildfire, and Kynaston's name stood prominently in it. Too prominently, methought, for his safety, as was proven on the morrow.

I was at The Dolphin with Killigrew, Talbot and several others, and we had Kynaston with us, when into the room came Sedley unannounced. His eyes alighted upon Ned, and his face was so altered by rage at the sight of him, and at the mocking smile wherewith the actor met his glance, that he grew ugly as the fiend.

"You insolent dog!" he cried, in a choking voice. "I have found you."

He took two quick steps toward Kynaston's chair, and raised his cane. But the actor who had watched his approach, without relaxing his smile, forestalled the attack by seizing the bumper of muscadine that stood before him, and letting fly the contents full into Sedley's face.

"A challenge!" cried some one, and as such Sir Charles appeared to interpret it.

He might have caned Kynaston and refused to fight him afterward; but stomach such an insult he could not. His whole manner changed on the instant.

"So, you fool, you prefer my sword to my cane? By Gad, you shall have it!"

Kynaston looked about him for a friend. In an instant I was upon my feet—an action which appeared to astonish Sedley, for haply he imagined that among those present 'twas unlikely Kynaston would find a supporter in such a business.

Talbot acted with me, while Fal-

mouth and Etheredge represented Sedley. The meeting was arranged for the following morning at seven in Leicester Fields.

I feared rather for Kynaston, for albeit Sedley was by no means a formidable opponent, the actor might prove still less so. He had desired us to go straight to the fields, where he would join us, and this we did, although it was unusual.

Upon reaching the ground, a few minutes before seven, we found Sedley and his friends already there, besides a party of nigh upon a dozen gentlemen who were come to see the sport, but there was no sign of Kynaston.

Suddenly we espied a chair approaching from the direction of St. Martin's Lane.

No sooner was it set down than I advanced—then stopped, and stood rooted to the ground in amazement as out of it stepped Lady Chesterton wrapped in a long cloak. My feelings undoubtedly were shared by all who stood there, for a sudden hush fell upon the company. In no way discomposed by the sight of so many spectators, Caroline walked, calm and stately, toward Sedley, before whom she dropped a curtsy.

"Sir Charles," quoth she, "I am come to tell you that there will be no fighting."

"How, madame?" he inquired, coldly.

"I sent word to the King last night of what was afoot, and to prevent this duel he has placed Kynaston under arrest."

"Oddslife, madame, what affair of yours was this?"

"Methinks it was greatly my affair. But——" She hesitated, and for a moment some of her assurance appeared to leave her. Then, "I will explain, Sir Charles, if you will step aside with me."

It was his turn to hesitate, while pride, vanity and curiosity fought their battle in his soul. In the end, however,

he bowed assent, and they moved away together.

Then Caroline turned and beckoned me.

"You also may hear my explanation, Sir Lionel."

A look of displeasure crossed Sedley's face, but he said no word as I joined them.

"Charles," she began, when we were out of earshot of those others. "I could not endure the thought of your shedding that lad's blood." And she turned a melting glance upon him.

"What is the fellow to you, madame?" asked Sedley, stiffly, his arms akimbo.

"Naught. I was not thinking of him, but of you. You, Charles, who are so great a swordsman, so skilled and deadly, opposed to a boy who scarcely knows how to hold a weapon. Oh, fie, Charles, it would be murder. Because the town lies will you punish an innocent boy?"

"Innocent!" he shouted in a frenzy. "Innocent! Are you mad, my lady? Did not Kynaston bring you back from Newark?"

"Charles," she said, slowly, "I solemnly swear to you that no one came to me at Newark yesterday; that I listened to no persuasions, and that I returned to London alone and of my own accord."

I stood amazed, wondering whether 'twas she or Kynaston that lied. There was a pause, then:

"In that case, madame," quoth Sir Charles, with a sneer, "your whims dumfound me."

"But at least they in no way concern this boy whom you wish to kill; whom you, Charles, my Charles"—and her voice sank to a murmur that was wondrous soft—"are seeking to murder."

"Can you explain why you left me at Newark?" he asked, and 'tis no miracle that his voice grew gentler.

She gave me a glance which clearly

bade me withdraw, and I obeyed, albeit reluctantly.

"What farce is being played yonder?" quoth Killigrew as I came up.

"I make no doubt that we shall soon learn," I answered.

A little while we waited, watching those two as they stood apart in earnest conversation. Now she caught his hand; now she set hers upon his shoulder, and thus they stood a while; then he took that hand in his, and, stooping, raised it to his lips. 'Twas clear she had conquered.

They came back together, and Sedley forthwith addressed the company.

"Gentlemen," said he, "you have heard from Lady Chesterton that Edward Kynaston is under arrest, and thus prevented from keeping his appointment. This lady, gentlemen, hath been gracious enough to explain certain matters, and I am satisfied that false rumors have maligned to me the conduct of him who was to have been my opponent here. At the instances of Lady Chesterton, I renounce all quarrel with Edward Kynaston, and do solemnly pledge my word to do him no hurt whatever."

His oath was followed by the silence of intense surprise, broken at length by a loud, long peal of mocking laughter from Caroline. It was a laugh that seemed to strike some chord of memory within me, and suddenly there surged before my mind a scene in the first act of "Macbeth," and the figure of Kynaston—that inimitable player of female parts—in the character of *Lady Macbeth*.

I glanced at Caroline's face, and that intangible, familiar likeness that had struck me when first I had seen her at her house in Pall Mall, and which I had attributed to dim memories of the child I had known, did now assume a definite shape.

Like a torrent realization broke upon

my mind, and I smote my forehead with my hand, dubbing myself a fool for not having understood before. And yet what manner of dupe had not Sedley been—Sedley, who had spent hours of sweet dalliance, and ended by eloping with him.

As I looked, the feathered hat and gorgeous wig of glossy black were whisked away, revealing the actor's fair hair beneath. Casting aside the long woman's cloak in which he had come arrayed, Kynaston himself stood before the gasping company.

Those present stood thunderstruck, and for some moments silent. Then a great burst of laughter went up, at which Sedley was so maddened that with a roar he sprang at Kynaston.

But half a dozen rushed in between.

"Remember, Charles, you have pledged your honor to do him no hurt," cried Falmouth, and Sedley groaned.

Kynaston, however, professed himself ready to cross swords if Sedley wished it, but those about would not permit it. The game had gone against Sir Charles, and he was dishonored if he went back upon his word and his solemn oath.

Dick Talbot and I carried Kynaston home to breakfast with me. In my coach, he entertained us on the way with a recitation of the discourse that had passed 'twixt him and Sedley on the occasion of their elopement. He added, too, the information that he was himself the writer of the letter that I had received from Lord Chesterton, who had—so far as he knew—no notion of taking a second wife.

"And should this matter come to his ears, I shall look to you to make my peace with him, Sir Lionel," he added. "For the rest, the house in Pall Mall and the suppers I have given have cost me a handsome sum, but my revenge on Sedley hath been no whit less handsome."

The Foretaste



IN AINSLEE'S FOR APRIL

IS it wonderful," Sonia cried, starting up, "that one finds it hard to die before one has lived? Wonderful that one who gives everything should want to keep one moment for the man she loves? Wonderful that one cannot be resolute all through, but must be a woman at the last? I am mad to-night—or sane, for once—I don't know which, or care. One thing's sure: my life is mine now to do as I please with. At last it is mine—or yours, if you like."

She held out her hands to me. And I took her slowly in my arms and put my lips to hers.

From "*Sonia*," a complete novel, by Frank Harris.

* * *

THE most beautiful room of all is the room of the thousand peacocks. Here are painted on the walls a thousand peacocks. It is said that Picat engaged a Japanese artist to do the work—one of the greatest painters in the world. The ceiling is of gold, with here and there great peacocks' eyes of purple and crimson and blue and green, staring down upon you. The carpet is of gold and purple, and the great divan which fills one end of the room is covered with blue silk, like the sea of the Côte d'Azur, and the big cushions are sewn all over with real peacocks' feathers. Four balls of crystal, covered with the wings of butterflies, hang from the ceiling by chains of gold, and fill the room with the softest light, staining with a dozen different colors the glass, set upon a table of lapis lazuli.

From "*The Room of the Thousand Peacocks*," by Norman Davey.

IT is not correct taste to know the name of a club waiter, so that I must apologize for knowing William's, and still more for not forgetting it. If, again, to speak of a waiter is bad form, to speak bitterly is the comic degree of it. But William has disappointed me sorely.

It would not become me to know precisely when I begun to think William an ingrate, but I date his lapse from the evening when he brought me oysters. I detest oysters, and no one knew it better than William. Between me and a certain member who smacks his lips twelve times to a dozen of them William knew that I liked a screen to be placed until we had reached the soup, and yet he gave me the oysters and the other man my sardine. Both the other man and I called quickly for brandy and the head waiter. To do William justice, he shook, but never can I forget his audacious explanation: "Beg pardon, sir, but I was thinking of something else."

In these words William had flung off the mask, and now I knew him for what he was.

From "*The Inconsiderate Waiter*," by Sir James M. Barrie.

* * *

I'VE told you before," cried Raffles, "that the biggest man alive is the man who's committed a murder and not yet been found out. Just think of it! Think of coming in here and talking to the men, very likely about the murder itself; and knowing you've done it; and wondering how they'd look if they knew! Oh, it would be great!"

"Good old Raffles!" I chuckled.

"I mean it."

"You know very well you wouldn't commit a murder, whatever else you might do."

"I know very well I'm going to commit one to-night."

He was leaning back in the saddle-back chair, watching me with keen eyes sheathed by languid lids; now he started forward, and his eyes leaped to mine like cold steel from a scabbard. Their meaning was no longer in doubt. I read murder in his clenched hands, and murder in his locked lips, but a hundred murders in those hard, blue eyes.

From "Willful Murder," by E. W. Hornung.



TOURNAMENT AWARDS

THE anonymous story in the Book Lovers' Tournament for January was written by Edgar Allan Poe. Its title is "The Oval Portrait."

James S. Pope, of Atlanta, Georgia, contributed the winning letter in the January contest. His contribution was awarded first place and the prize of fifty dollars because, in the opinion of the judges, its whimsical flavor enhanced the interest of its author's very shrewd and sound discussion of the story and gave the letter a characteristic personal tone and a reading zest not matched by any of its otherwise excellent and scholarly competitors.

Mr. Pope's letter is reproduced below, followed by extracts from the ten entries judged next in order of excellence. To each of the ten second-place winners prizes of five dollars have been awarded.

THE WINNING LETTER

January 5, 1925.

Editor, AINSLEE'S MAGAZINE:

The valet worried me a little at first. Why, I am not at all sure. Certainly Poe has at one time or another advanced any number of fine and polished gentlemen palpably of the class that travels properly attended. Nevertheless,

I seized upon this perfectly legitimate gentleman of service as a faint but ominous danger signal. Just what form this peril seemed to assume, or whether it ever sufficiently defined itself to take on any form whatsoever, I cannot now recall. Perhaps I was a bit overanxious and no doubt entirely too suspicious of the editor. I think the valet stirred into life a vague notion that some English imitator, with more or less facility in the invocation of horror, had been found, and that he was being foully insinuated into a gentlemanly tournament simply to confuse and discomfit the impulsive judgment. At any rate this incipient agnosticism did not survive two full paragraphs, blasted by the swift accumulation of the most incontrovertible evidence; the early and continued appearance of characteristics too unmistakably Edgar Allan Poe. Still, at first, the valet did worry me a little.

And the evidence? It is so abundant that there needs must be exercised a fine restraint in presenting it. This I shall endeavor to do, first noting a few examples of what might be termed technical evidence, as witness: ". . . commingled gloom and grandeur;" ". . . rich, yet tattered and antique;" "Its walls were hung with tapestry and bedecked with manifold and multiform armorial trophies;" ". . . tongues of a tall candelabrum;" ". . . fringed curtains of black velvet;" ". . . and the deep midnight came;" ". . . delirium." These quotations are not painfully assembled from here and there in a long rambling story. They are quietly detached from the first two paragraphs of a tale remarkable, among other things, for its brevity. That so many startlingly distinct indications of authorship should be found in so small a space might almost give rise to the suspicion that Poe actually wrote the story for the precise purpose for which it is here used.

I assume that the reasonable mind is convinced, but let us glance briefly at what, for want of a more colorable label, we will call emotional evidence, as witness: ". . . a maiden of rarest beauty;" ". . . all light and smiles;" ". . . a passionate, and wild, and moody man;" "*She was dead.*"

Perhaps there is a cynic left. If so, cheerfully and in a spirit of utmost impartiality I refer him to page 169 of the first volume of "Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque," a pocket edition published by Charles Scribner's Sons. The name, he will find, is "The Oval Portrait." And this, we must admit, is that rare and comforting thing called conclusive evidence. So little evidence is.

For those who are accustomed to look on De Maupassant as the supreme master of

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compression, there should be matter for stimulating thought in this tale. Into one paragraph Poe has condensed a tense, moving, tragic history of two lives, and we are left with an indefinable impression that one word more would have spoiled the entire story. A girl comes to us, a young bride, radiant and lovely and in love, with only one rival for the affections of her husband—his art. A few sentences down she is dead, and there is no slightest detail of the slow, tortuous manner in which she is inexorably drained of her life blood, so that it may go to perfect the husband's hated art, that we are not made intensely to feel. De Maupassant's compression is largely that of an Associated Press dispatch, and we experience a cool detachment from his characters that leaves us unmoved in their most terrible disasters. Poe distills rather than compresses, and we are left the warm-blooded juices of life.

He has a rigorous manner of concentrating on his central theme and his chief characters that is sometimes a bit irritating to our natural curiosity. A man, desperately wounded, seeks shelter in an abandoned chateau. Who is he, and why and by whom was he wounded, and whither is he going? The chateau itself looms mysteriously. It has been temporarily and lately abandoned. For what imaginable reason? Presumably a morning came, as is the custom of mornings, and I for one would like to know something of the undoubtedly important happenings it brought forth. Strange movements stir the air and dreadful shapes infest the shadows. There are at least a half-dozen good stories drifting about on the edge of things. We sense them and we wish for them and that is all. One story or two dozen between the lines—it would not matter. Poe is not thus easily to be led into temptation. He concentrates intensely on the one he has to tell, and before our first feeling of chill suspense has worn off the thing is done. If the short-story students want an example of singleness of impression, I presume to recommend "The Oval Portrait."

If we must label, if we must pour into a few words the very quintessence of Poe's style, then he has already done it for us. It is "commingled gloom and grandeur." And this may be considered descriptive of the man himself, no less than of his work. His very intellect, so fragily brilliant, is of "commingled gloom and grandeur." The heritage it has left us is a rich one.

Atlanta, Ga. * * * JAMES S. POPE.

From Other Prize Winners

For a few moments I sit in silent contemplation. I feel very humble indeed when I

realize how long it took me to discover the merits of this little masterpiece. I should have remembered that the best in literature, as in music, or in any of the arts, is not the most obvious. Real gems are worthy of study. Only then are their beauties fully revealed and appreciated. So in this story of "The Oval Portrait."

PEARL R. BRAMEL.

Salt Lake City, Utah.

* * *

A novel test of this strange power of Poe is to read any one of his tales aloud. You will find that you cannot read in an ordinary, light, matter-of-fact tone as you might while reading a story by, let us say, Mark Twain. As I read "The Oval Portrait" aloud, my voice gradually, almost imperceptibly, deepened until finally I perceived that my tone and expression had changed to a low monotone. I, and my listeners, had abandoned the workaday world, and we had entered—to quote Professor Stedman, Poe's biographer—"his wonderland, where one must forego the dervish's ointment of disillusion, so invidious to the wizard and fatal to the delight obtainable from this enchantment."

MARJORIE DENT CANDEE.

New York City.

* * *

"The Oval Portrait" possesses tendencies and properties of style which recall other works of Poe. We get a glimpse of the lost "Lenore" in the words "She was a maiden of rarest beauty." When we read the words, "And he was a passionate, and wild, and moody man," we again experience that semireligious emotion which we felt when we read in his "Silence" the words, "And the man trembled in the solitude—but the night waned, and he sat upon the rock." This from that solemn, biblical repetition of the conjunction. And, ah, that account of "The Oval Portrait!"—those "vague and quaint words" which the narrator read! How we shiver at "the melancholy menace of their tone!" Try as I might, I could not help seeing Edgar Allan Poe shedding tears for his child wife when I read that description.

J. HILLIARD FOLEY.

Ottawa, Canada. * * *

Poe is as unmistakable in letters as Chopin in music, or Corot in painting. . . . The little tragedy has gloom ever deepening until the culmination has grown like a flower from its bud. Instead of employing his Gothic fancy, Poe carries out this tale with a lack of overstress that witnesses his Hellenic love of beauty; but the idea of the story comes from the Teutonic soul that is Poe's deepest

self—a nature born of generations of dwellers on foam-tossed shores under sad gray skies, or amid shadowy forests frowned on by high alps. Poe of the Greek intellect and the Gothic temperament! Will oil and salt water mix without a rending of atoms? What wonder that Poe's soul was born to anguish as well as greatness?

MARGARET GRAY.

New York City.

* * *

The thing is structurally perfect, like most of Poe's works. A symphony of accurate narrative prose with a tinge of emotion, the style is rhythmically varied and pervaded with just that touch of bizarre eccentricity that makes for Poe's unique charm. . . . There are other excellences—as the manner in which an impression of the supernatural is called forth by a quite plausible tale, and the unmentioned moral, to me reminiscent of James Branch Cabell's cry: "Lord, what a deal of ruined life it takes to make a little art!"

S. P. HORTON.

Ithaca, New York.

* * *

Mr. Mencken calls Poe a citizen of No Man's Land. He was one of Baudelaire's "Children of the Moon," with her kiss upon him whenever he turned from the world of reason to his own dream world. Now the Moon's kiss contains something like poison for ordinary earth folk. And it is true that many of Poe's romantic tales partake of the acrid bitter-sweet taste of poison.

RUTH R. KEEP.

Lowell, Mass.

* * *

The total impression of this story of "The Oval Portrait" is so strongly suggestive of a fine but gloomy oil painting in words, that it is an effort to me to think of it in any other terms. It is a mass of rich, heavy shade from which the high lights emerge all the more tellingly, in the same way that the uncertain gleam of firelight brings out the beauty of

polished brass or copper far better than does the harsh brilliancy of electric light.

New York City. AMOS MASSIE.

* * *

De Quincy might have written that story, but it was too fine, the touch was too delicate, the diction too graceful. No, it could only have been from the pen of one who was not only a novelist, but who had in addition the spirit of a poet; and there seemed to me to be only one who could claim that merit, and that one the author of "The Fall of the House of Usher."

J. L. PEPPER.

South Portland Heights, Maine.

* * *

As a story I think "The Oval Portrait" is somewhat disappointing. The atmosphere—the characteristic Poe atmosphere—is of course only to be admired. But the story itself is not rounded out. It seems to me that the dénouement was weakened by the detailed explaining away of the sick man's first startled impression of the picture. If this had been omitted and more left to the imagination, if the writer had been content to give us just a single glimpse of a supernaturally lifelike painting, then when we learn that the living soul of a woman actually is enmeshed in the canvas we are not balked by the sick man's awareness that it really was "only a painting."

LESLIE S. WAITE.

Vancouver, B. C.

* * *

I should not rank this narrative as one of Poe's best stories. Its conclusion gives me a feeling of disappointment. . . . The story is made dramatic by the death of the wife just as her husband had completed his masterpiece. But if Poe meant us to understand that the artist was literally putting her life on the canvas, he has overestimated the credulity of the average reader who will, I think, consider that inference merely symbolic of too much ambition for worldly success, tending to the neglect and ultimate loss of possessions of greater value.

STELLA R. WILSON.

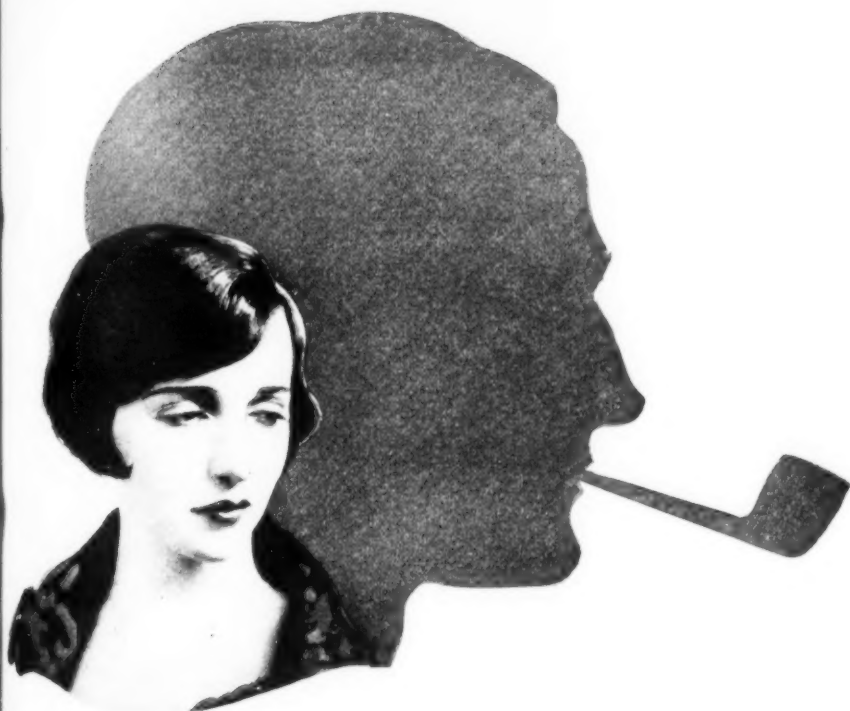
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"The fragrance of pipe tobacco makes me wish I were a man"..... *Bob Daniels*



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Eat two or three cakes regularly every day before meals: on crackers—in fruit juices, water or milk—or just plain, nibbled from the cake. *For constipation especially, dissolve one cake in hot water (not scalding) before breakfast and at bedtime.* Buy several cakes at a time—they will keep fresh in a cool dry place for two or three days. All grocers have Fleischmann's Yeast. Start eating it today!

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"SKIN ERUPTIONS HAD BROKEN OUT all over my face and body. The doctor told me to take Fleischmann's Yeast. I did so for about two months. Now I have as fine a complexion as any one could wish."

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THIS FAMOUS FOOD tones up the entire system—
aids digestion—clears the skin—banishes constipation.

Amazing 10-minute test ends foot and leg pains —or costs you nothing

Millions have found a new way to have strong, normal and shapely feet. No more pains and aches. We invite you to try it. Specialists urge that you do. If pains fail to disappear the test is free.

ONCE again science adds joy to living by a new discovery. And this discovery is as far-reaching that it will benefit no less than twenty million people. Almost everyone at different times suffers from aching, paining feet and legs. Many think their pains result from being tired or that they come from rheumatism, sciatica or other similar diseases. But in thousands of cases there is an even more serious cause. Only recently has science discovered it.

When certain muscles weaken

The foot is composed of innumerable muscles, sensitive nerves and tiny bones.

The bones are arranged to form two arches. One is a hidden arch few people know about, extending across the foot from the little to the big toes. The other extends along the foot from heel to toes, composing the instep. It is the function of the muscles to hold the bones forming these arches in place.

Now, say the specialists, modern shoes, and other things too, cause the muscles to weaken. As a result the bones spread from overstrain and arches sag.

The forward arch falls first, throwing the entire foot structure out of balance. Then the instep breaks down and completely gives way. Bones crush delicate blood vessels and sensitive nerves. Pain is unbearable.

Science corrects misplacements. Nature heals and strengthens. Pains vanish like magic

Difficult as this might seem to correct, science has found a simple yet astonishingly effective remedy. To strengthen the muscles exercise is necessary. So science provides a thin, strong, super-elastic band to assist the muscles in holding the bones in place. It takes the pressure off the nerves and helps nature strengthen the muscles through constant daily use. This band is the Jung Arch Brace. The secret of its success lies in its correct tension, in its scientific contour and design.

Rigid supports merely offer temporary relief and tend to further weaken the muscles by supplanting their natural functions. But this soft, pliable band can soon be discarded entirely, so quickly does it do its work.

End These Pains



Pains, aches or cramping in calf of leg and heel.



Pains or aches in ankle, heel, arch or instep.



Pains or cramps in toes, calluses on ball of foot spreading causing bunions.

Other symptoms.

Tired, aching, burning sensations. Shooting pains when stepping on uneven surfaces. Shoes feel uncomfortable and seem too small. Feet become sensitive.



And from the instant you slip it on you can dance, run, walk or stand without the slightest pain.

So light and thin is this band that it can be worn with the sheerest hose, the tightest and most stylish high-heeled shoes. Physicians say that it is the one scientific way to restore the natural structure of the foot. They urge you to make the test offered you here, without delay.

Make this amazing 10-minute test

Go to any druggist, shoe dealer or chiropractor and be fitted with a pair of Jung Arch Braces. Make the free test. If not delighted with the instant and lasting relief, take them back and every penny will be returned.

If your dealer hasn't them, we will supply you. With a strip of paper $\frac{1}{4}$ inch wide, and with foot off floor, send us measure around the smallest part of your instep, where the forward edge of the brace is shown in the circle diagram, or send us size and width of shoe. We will send you a pair of Jung's Arch Braces ("Wonder" style). Simply pay the postman \$1 and postage.

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Then, some years ago, I told you about Talcum for Men. At that time, men classed talcum with rouge and lip sticks. But to-day, the custom is almost universal to rub on a velvety, soothing film of Talcum for Men, which protects and doesn't show white on your face.

Last year, I pulled my third prophecy. I said that if you would try Mennen Skin Balm, you would find it the most delightful and efficient after-shaving preparation that ever touched your face. Incidentally, it's great for chapped lips or roughened skin—as wonderful for hands as for the face. Antiseptic and astringent. Right now, to-day, Skin Balm has won national acceptance and its sales are amazing.

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Jim Henry
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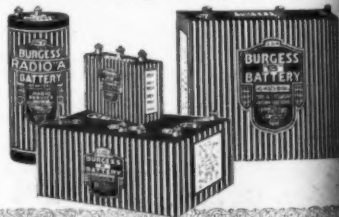
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* * *

You, yourself, rarely know when you have halitosis (unpleasant breath). That's the insidious thing about it. And even your closest friends won't tell you.

Sometimes, of course, halitosis comes from some deep-seated organic disorder that requires professional advice. But usually—and fortunately—halitosis is only a local condition that yields to the regular use of Listerine as a mouth wash and gargle. It puts you on the safe and polite side. Moreover, in using Listerine to combat halitosis, you are quite sure to avoid sore throat and those more serious illnesses that start with throat infections.

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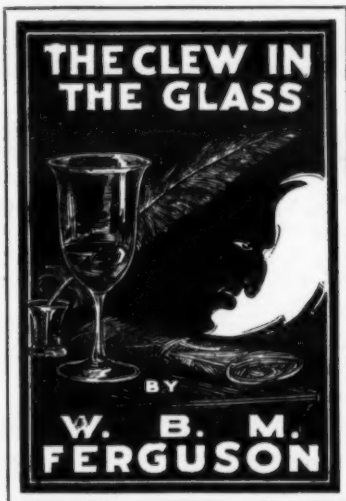
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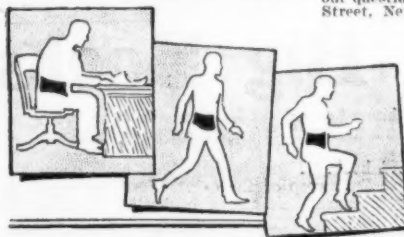
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